

CENTERING PRAYER IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RULE OF LIFE AS A  
MEANS OF STRENGTHENING CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP IN A PRISON

A THESIS PROJECT

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BY

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To Paul Jr. and Paul III – One is the real scholar in the family, who suggested books and made numerous inquiries about my progress, and the other kept me plied with soft candy and gum when I had to chew in order to think and write; I needed both.

## BIBLICAL ABBREVIATIONS

NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version (All references, unless otherwise noted)

## ABSTRACT

Inmates often set one goal – to stay out of prison. Stephen Macchia's *Crafting a Rule of Life* provided structure to help South Carolina inmates set goals in every major area of their lives as part of their Christian discipleship. It was hypothesized that the internal benefits of centering prayer could help an experimental group implement their rule of life easier than a control group. Pre- and post-survey questionnaires, along with interviews, were inadequate to prove the hypothesis. This troubled project ended up being more of a personal conceptual study for the author instead of an empirical one.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE PROBLEM AND THE SETTING

#### The Change to a Prison Setting

The idea of prison as a possible research site never entered my mind. I had originally planned to work with Christian married couples to help them develop a rule of life – a plan to develop practices with specific goals to improve their marriage – using Stephen Macchia’s *Crafting a Rule of Life* as the guiding text. I thought Macchia’s structured study of characters drawn from history and the Bible, along with general principles to be explored (i.e., spiritual priorities, relational priorities, financial priorities, etc.) would be inspiring and comprehensive.<sup>1</sup> I envisioned a 16-week discipleship program to strengthen the couples’ relationship with God and with each other. Also, I reasoned that the results of a previous study on centering prayer suggested that the practice could probably help the married participants reach their goals. That study was a 90-day trial to see if centering prayer practitioners experienced positive changes in their lives as a result. Eight of the original twelve participants who completed a post-survey questionnaire reported such changes as becoming more aware of God’s presence throughout the day (100%); wanting to spend more time in prayer (75%); wanting to spend more time in the Scriptures (50%) and wanting to serve others more (25%). I was certain an experimental group, who would be learning and practicing centering prayer, would implement their rule of life easier than those in a control group who would not be participating in any suggested meditative practice. I had been practicing centering prayer

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1. Stephen A. Macchia, *Crafting a Rule of Life: An Invitation to the Well-Ordered Way* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2012).

for a few years by then and had noticed some of the same things the research participants did.

I had to change my plans. I could not get participants for my study in my rural community where privacy is prized. Little did I know that a casual conversation with someone about the joys of serving Thanksgiving dinner to inmates at one of the local prisons would point to a possible research site and lead to my introduction to the American prison system. I later found out that I live within a 50-mile driving distance from four prisons: Kershaw Correctional Institution, Evans Correctional Institution (ECI), Bennettsville Federal Prison, all in South Carolina, and Brown Bear Corrections in North Carolina. Since two of my congregants were employed at ECI, an all-male facility, I selected it as a possible research site.

I contacted the chaplain to gain access to the prison and to discuss my proposal. He informed me that I would have to get the warden's approval before I could start my research. In the meantime, he invited me to observe an anger management class to determine if I would be comfortable working with the inmate population. I enjoyed the initial observation immensely and began returning weekly as a volunteer. Within a few weeks, the chaplain allowed me to facilitate the anger management group alone. I enjoyed being with the inmates but became concerned when I noticed the men were not as forthcoming with me as they were with the chaplain. Asking open-ended questions usually met with silence, shrugs, or short responses. Hardly anyone else furthered the conversations with added comments. The chaplain continued to assure me that once they got to know and trust me, they would participate more. For the sake of my research, I hoped so.

As the weeks passed and as I awaited the warden's approval, I became convinced that my research proposal could offer some help to the inmates before they left prison. Some of them were in the anger management class because of court mandates; some were there because they continued to have angry outbursts. Whether anger contributed to their incarceration in the first place or developed subsequently, Macchia's program seemed like a viable option for helping them make necessary changes. The more time I spent with them, the more I became certain that the plans I had for the married couples could easily be transferred to this population. I thought I could help them make new choices that could lessen the chances of their having to repeat the anger management class or of returning to prison.

### My Introduction to the American Prison System

In his book, *Seven Thousand Ways to Listen*, Mark Nepo retells a story about two skiers who saw a trapped moose that had fallen through a thin spot on a frozen lake one night. Unable to pull the animal out, they covered and shined their flashlights on it and the surrounding ice, hoping to provide warmth. Their goal was to keep flesh-cutting ice crystals from forming on the stuck animal since they would not be able to get help until morning. Nepo writes,

This is a powerful metaphor for how to listen to and be with those who have fallen through: stay close and keep them warm, resisting the urge to prematurely solve the situation. If nothing can be done, sit with them, and withstand the urge to abandon those who seem stuck. Offer your tent and stay till the way out presents itself, not forcing a rescue.<sup>2</sup>

Most American inmates are stuck. It has been commonly reported by prison authorities that upwards of two-thirds of them will be re-incarcerated within three years of their

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2. Mark Nepo, *Seven Thousand Ways to Listen: Staying Close to What Is Sacred* (New York: Atria, 2012), 188, Kindle.

release. Despite the best efforts of some, including the inmates themselves, many of them are not rescued from spending large portions of their lives in prison. They continue to fall through the prison system with a myriad of variable configurations to explain why – biased judicial systems; legislatures enacting mandatory long sentencing; lack of personal motivation; inadequate rehabilitation programs; failure of communities to welcome their return; mental health issues; drug addictions; parole violations, inability to secure sustaining employment, etc. Regardless of the reasons and in view of such continuous high recidivism rates, it looks as if the punch line of the US prison system’s story is being given: *Something is wrong somewhere*. Currently, America leads the world in incarcerating its citizens and in doing so for longer periods of time.<sup>3</sup> With over 2.3 million people in prisons and with most of them likely to return, it certainly appears time for authorities to reconsider some aspects of its present approach to the prison community in order to change America’s prison narrative.

One area of reconsideration to start with could be to face the fact that prison changes people. With the large number of repeat offenders, the change is clearly not for the better. In the 2003 *Annual Review of Sociology*, Visher and Travis conclude that most of the research on inmates emphasize the programs offered but hardly consider the idea that as a social institution, prison itself is an agent of transformation. They go on to point out how the lack of information to help understand “pathways as a function of individual

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3. Adam Liptak, “US prison population dwarfs that of other nations,” (April 23, 2008), [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/23/world/americas/23iht-23prison.12253738.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/23/world/americas/23iht-23prison.12253738.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) (accessed February 20, 2014).

actions, choices, and personal identity and of an individual's social environment"<sup>4</sup> can lead to prison. Yet, it is not that the influence of the inmates on each other or the influence of the prison system itself has been naively or completely ignored. The problem seems to be not adequately addressing the magnitude of the influences, which may be one of the largest contributors to the continuously high recidivism rate. Individual decisions and behaviors are not made in social vacuums. Of significance is the fact that prisons have their own defined "social relationships, conflicts, norms, and community life."<sup>5</sup> As a result, members of the prison community too often fail to adapt to other communities upon their release and, thus, return to prison.

There is no doubt that the prison environment is challenging. Even though it has been done – not everyone is re-incarcerated – resisting prison communal influences can be extremely difficult. The close proximity of dangerous people helps define it as a dangerous place to live and work. One glaring way the prison community differs from the society-at-large is in the paucity of alternatives. Those outside of prison often have the freedom to determine their own schedule, decide if and when they want to engage in social interactions, and choose their own place of residency. This is not so for inmates; they are expected to go, live, eat, and sleep where they are told, which means they cannot always avoid undesirable social situations. Lennie Spitale states, "Prison is a culture of hardness....The cursing, the angry challenges, the bragging, the threats, the constant

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4. Christy A. Visher and Jeremy Travis, "Transitions from Prison to Community: Understanding Individual Pathways," *Annual Review of Sociology* 29 (August 2003), 107, 97, <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/30036962?uid=3739896&uid=2&uid=4&uid=3739256&sid=21102571201933> (accessed May 16, 2013).

5. Visher and Travis, 107.

noise, the intermittent noise – even the silences seem frigid and unfriendly.”<sup>6</sup> Many times inmates do not realize the social roles they develop while in prison are not going to help them keep themselves out of jail in the future. Aggression and subterfuge are usually not viewed favorably outside of prison. In the meantime, it appears prison authorities and law makers appear slow to recognize the pervasive impact of prison and to do something about it. There is a continual call for prison reform, but in no other segment of society do Americans say they expect positive changes with such extensive negative influences.

### A Brief History of the American Prison System

Therein lies a fallacy in the American prison system that helps keep it stuck – to *declare* expectations of change while in reality expecting none. Because sustained recidivism reduction has eluded American prison policy makers and workers almost since the development of prisons, it seems that consistent hope in the efficacy of the prison system has been elusive, also. In *The Furnace of Affliction*, Jennifer Graber traces the history of the struggles of prison officials to implement policies they hoped would give them desired results (i.e., self-supporting and/or profitable institutions, reduced crime/recidivism rates, compliant inmates).<sup>7</sup> She concludes that their strategies were geared toward rehabilitation or punishment or some combination of both. Graber also notes that the early prison reformers were often Protestants who implemented rules and procedures rooted in their belief that inmate transformation could best be shaped by Christian conversion. Exactly how that conversion would occur differed based on the

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6. Lennie Spitale, *Prison Ministry: Understanding Prison Culture Inside and Out* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2002), 88-89.

7. The following summary is taken from Jennifer Graber, *The Furnace of Affliction: Prisons and Religion in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), Kindle.

beliefs of those in power. In addition to conversion expectations, they also had to implement procedures to deal with whatever their current prevailing conditions were, such as overcrowding and the rise of inmate crime. After a while, however, Graber says their hopes for the effectiveness of their programs usually ended when their anticipated results were not realized as quickly as they liked.

Graber goes on to explain the various metaphors used in the cause and effect approach to prison reform and management. With a rehabilitative focus, the initial reform groups largely viewed prison as a garden where inmates could be trained, like vines on a trellis, through religious instruction and work.<sup>8</sup> Solitary confinement was used primarily to give them time to reflect on their lives, voluntarily make changes to comply with prison rules, and decide once-and-for-all not to return. When this approach failed to produce the anticipated outcomes, the garden gave way to the furnace.<sup>9</sup> Likewise, the rehabilitation focus shifted to punishment with the reasoning that the fires of prison had to be hot enough to meet the ever-present need for order; to administer punishments for crimes which resulted in imprisonment in the first place; and to penalize anew for any infractions of the prison's rules. Harsher practices, such as corporeal punishments, which had previously been reduced or eliminated, also increased, and solitary confinement was now mainly used to punish. Yet, those measures would pale when the fires of the furnace were increased to symbolize hell. For example, in New York's notorious Sing Sing prison, inmates suffered lashings with whips; reduced food, water, and light in solitary confinement; involuntary showers with freezing water; and being rolled on the floor like

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8. Graber, chap.1.

9. Graber, chaps. 3, 4, 5.



a ball with a stick anchored behind their bent knees.<sup>10</sup> The severe negative reinforcements, designed to serve as deterrents, increased when officials' hopes decreased. Still, these practices did not reduce recidivism.

It must be noted that regardless of the prevailing view of those in charge, inmate suffering has always been a part of the American prison story. Just *how much* has been the difficult question to be answered. Yet, Graber says that as debates about the different approaches continued, an underlying assumption emerged. She concludes, "The prison's message has been clear: criminals are different from everybody else. They are worse than everybody else. They deserve to suffer."<sup>11</sup> Therefore, regardless of rehabilitation-focused attempts for prison reform, punishment would always be a visible element in US prisons.

#### The Need for Change in the Current American Prison System

There is one other point Graber makes that continues to be part of the prison milieu today. She notices that the main goals of the penal system eventually morphed into one overall goal. Essentially, as the hoped-for conversions did not happen and did not produce the expected results, not only did the language about inmate religious conversion or transformation also lessen, but officials began to be primarily concerned about inmates' outward behavior instead. Regardless of what was happening in the spiritual or interior life of the inmates, the ultimate goal of the prison system was to turn them into law abiding citizens.<sup>12</sup> It seemed to be the only practical answer because, in the end, policy makers and private citizens wanted people who knew how to follow rules. When

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10. Graber, chap. 6.

11. Graber, epilogue.

12. Graber, chap. 5.

inmates were released back into the communities, the mark that their prison stay had been a success was if they obeyed the law. Then, and now, that goal often remains unmet.

Arguably, a reason for the continuous recidivism is the fact that rehabilitation has never been a major investment in the American penal system.<sup>13</sup> One explanation may be true now more than ever, at least in many rural areas. That is, prisons contribute to local economies. As factories in certain areas closed, local officials petitioned federal and state governments to construct prisons.<sup>14</sup> There can be very little incentive to rehabilitate the people who committed crimes which resulted in their incarceration when law-abiding citizens need employment. What appeared to be a good solution looks like it might be the same as asking the foxes to pretend they are not happy when the hens and roosters come to the houses the foxes are guarding. Although there are prison workers and officials who do want to see recidivism reduced, there must also be those who have no immediate stake in seeing a reduction in inmate numbers.<sup>15</sup> As long as criminals are behind prison walls, they are not in prison officials' or any other community committing more crimes. Incarcerations mean prison staff can continue to be employed and not have to relocate to find jobs.

If the linear thinking continues that suggests if inmate numbers increase, then increase the number of prisons, there will never be serious consideration for the premise that the American prison system itself is fundamentally broken. To continue to

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13. Joan Petersilia, "How We Help: Preparing Inmates for Release," in *When Prisoners Come Home: Parole and Prisoner Reentry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 93.

14. Jeffrey Ian Ross and Stephen C. Richards, *Beyond Bars: Rejoining Society after Prison* (New York: Penguin Group (USA), 2009), xiii.

15. Mark Halsey, "Assembling Recidivism: The Promise and Contingencies of Post-Release Life," *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 94, no 4 (Summer 2007): 1254, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40042862> (accessed May 18, 2013).

incarcerate without earnestly probing for reasons why recidivism remains high is to suggest that economic fears (providing jobs for prison employees) trump solving the crime problem. As if that were not enough, supplemental but necessary supports outside of the prison walls, such as transitional and residential programs, further exacerbate the recidivism problem. They are hardly funded,<sup>16</sup> which means it will be difficult for some inmates to legally survive when they are released from prison. Hence, the cycle of prison/release will continue without much interruption unless crucial changes are made to the current system.

To assume, however, that inmate-post-prison success depends almost exclusively on prison programs is to excuse inmate responsibility. Ultimately, they decide how they will live in and out of prison. Unfortunately, Ross and Richards say they usually make decisions that place them in one of two extreme groups. Either they stop trying to stay out of prison and resign themselves to the belief that they will eventually return, or they “go warrior” meaning they pledge to never go back and express a willingness to do anything to fulfill that promise.<sup>17</sup> Sadly, these decisions can occur very early in their prison experiences. Some inmates never recover from their first prison stay.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, some decisions made after the first imprisonment can have serious consequences. “Almost every time they return to prison they become more alienated, angry, and anti-social.”<sup>19</sup> In the long run, the vows for both extreme groups will cost society and them. On the one

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16. Petersilia, 10.

17. Ross and Richards, xii.

18. Visher and Travis, 107.

19. Ross and Richards, xii.

hand, tax payer dollars will have to provide for the sustenance and medical care of those who resign themselves to repeated returns for years, if not for life. Besides that, time spent in prison can never be recovered as they miss important events (birthdays, weddings, funerals) and the day-to-day occurrences (conversations, meal sharing, etc.) in their family's and friends' lives. Also, if their prison stays simply become a means of just waiting until they get out, they may also miss other important opportunities while incarcerated, such as pursuing educational goals, developing business/entrepreneurial strategies, participating in therapy, etc. On the other hand, for those who decided to *go warrior*, innocent lives may be jeopardized as they pursue their goals of not returning, or they may lose their own life in the process. Regardless of any stance taken, individual inmate decisions are part of the crime and recidivism problem – either to reduce it or remain part of it.

It must be noted that not all inmates return to prison after their first stay. They see prison as a warning and make key proactive decisions for lasting changes to stop the incarceration cycle even with a paucity of inmate rehabilitation programs. The common thread among inmates in this group can be attributed to “religion, family, [and] the desire to get out of prison as early as possible.”<sup>20</sup> Demico Boothe insists inmates can generate their own rehabilitation plan. He says,

There is nothing about federal or state prison rules that prohibits an incarcerated man from doing three things that are totally necessary for *true* rehabilitation, which is always *self*-rehabilitation [author's italics]: utilizing his time wisely and productively; reading; and staying out of trouble.<sup>21</sup>

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20. Demico Boothe, *Getting Out & Staying Out: A Black Man's Guide to Success After Prison* (Memphis, Tennessee: Full Service Publishing, 2008), 11.

21. Boothe, 21.

Ross and Richards also believe that rehabilitation must start with the individual inmate and ideally should start the first day of incarceration. Their advice is for the incarcerated to see imprisonment as a time for self-reflection and the beginning of a journey into the future as a better person.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, in order to help reduce recidivism, effective goal setting must be part of a self-rehabilitation program, although it may not be easy.

Goal setting is part of the Prison Fellowship group's program as they seek to address the obvious employment and/or education needs of inmates. Their workers meet daily with inmates to teach a values-based curriculum from a biblical perspective. Participants are also required to work at a job and improve their education while imprisoned. Yet, Pat Nolan of that group insists, "Crime is, at its root, a moral and spiritual problem, and breaking free of criminal attitudes and behaviors requires a spiritual transformation."<sup>23</sup> While the Prison Fellowship's work-study-Bible approach appears promising in reducing recidivism,<sup>24</sup> there are not enough programs such as theirs to stem the current flow of inmates returning to prison. Interestingly, their InnerChange Freedom Initiative is based on a program originally developed in Brazil. There, the government officials despairingly appealed to the local Catholic parish saying, "We can't

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22. Ross and Richards, 7.

23. Pat Nolan, *When Prisoners Return: Why Should We Care and How You and Your Church Can Help* (Merrifield, Virginia: Prison Fellowship, 2004), xvi.

24. Nolan, 11. Nolan reports that the University of Pennsylvania did a study on their program in Texas and found that two years after their release only 17.3% of the graduates had been rearrested, compared to 35% of the control group and only 8% had been reincarcerated, compared to 20.3% of the control group. See Nolan, 11-12.

do anything with this place; see if you can.”<sup>25</sup> American prisons officials do not have to circle back to the Church for assistance with a sense of utter hopelessness. They do not have to wait until things become grim.

Robin Casarjian adds that going to prison is “often the outer manifestation of months, years, or even a lifetime of inner turmoil and crisis. It is most often the outer manifestation of confinement in an inner prison of fear, powerlessness, hopelessness, guilt, shame, anger, and low self-esteem.”<sup>26</sup> Thus, it is safe to assume if inner struggles are not addressed during the prison stay, those same dilemmas will accompany the inmates upon their release. It must be noted that some inmates will *not* address their inner wounds, struggles and pain and still manage to either get out on parole or complete their sentence. They will actually re-enter society, but staying out will be another matter. Yet, one of the benefits of starting the internal work earlier is that its impact can be experienced before inmates get out of prison. Those decisions can not only affect the inmates themselves but the lives of other inmates as well. Casarjian points out that one way some inmates retaliate against their own inner pain is by victimizing others. Their aim is to neutralize their own feelings of weaknesses.<sup>27</sup> If they were to attend to their own internal scarring, it could help reduce the victimization so prevalent in the prison culture.

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25. Rob Moll, “Rx for Recidivism: Prison Fellowship President Mark Earley Talks about Challenges the Ministry Faces,” *Christianity Today* (November 2006), 70, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/november/36.70.html> (accessed August 21, 2013).

26. Robin Casarjian, *Houses of Healing: A Prisoner's Guide to Inner Power and Freedom* (Boston: Lionheart Press, 1995), 5.

27. Casarjian, 42.

Lennie Spitale says, “The average prisoner sitting in his or her cell isn’t really interested in lofty opinions about theology. ‘My life is broken. How do I fix it?’ is the basic question he asks. ‘If you say it’s God, tell me how that works.’”<sup>28</sup> If what Spitale asserts is true, one gauge of the effectiveness of any spiritual transformation approach should be measured by how well inmates live with others. Often their broken lives negatively affect those with whom they come in contact daily when they are imprisoned and continue with others when they are released. John Perkins insisted as early as 1984,

The moral dimension focuses on life in a witnessing community. The moral [dimension] includes both people’s character – their perceptions, disposition, intentions, attitudes and values – and their conscience – the processes by which they, as believers in Jesus Christ and members of his church, discern the will of God and, guided by the community’s ethical norms and principles, decide faithful action within particular moral situations.<sup>29</sup>

Therefore, an effective theological approach cannot be compartmentalized to weekly Bible study discussions, isolated from larger social moorings. Part of the reason inmates are imprisoned in the first place is that they have not met the social demands or norms of the outside community. Too often “little is done to change the moral perspective of offenders ... [because] the very skills inmates develop to survive inside prison make them anti-social when they are released.”<sup>30</sup> It stands to reason if they are expected to live successfully within society upon release, they should start to practice while incarcerated. At any rate, it seems an integrative rehabilitation program with life-skills, education,

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28. Spitale, 195.

29. John H. Perkins, “Practical Theology: What Will It Become?” *Christian Century*, (February 1-8, 1984), 3, <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1372> (accessed May 16, 2013).

30. Nolan, 2.

social skills, spiritual/moral reflections, and social relationship components must be considered when planning programs to reduce recidivism in America.

#### The Need for Change in South Carolina's Prison System

While recidivism rates in South Carolina are below the national average of two-thirds within three years, they still show a negative trend. See the table below.<sup>31</sup>

Current Recidivism Rates for South Carolina

Time	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
1 year or less	12.1%	11.9%	13.1%	12.3%	11.9%	9.9%	9.5%
2 years or less	25.5%	25.6%	25.7%	24.0%	22.8%	20.5%	19.2%
3 years or less	33.9%	33.6%	33.5%	30.6%	29.4%	27.5%	25.7%
4 years or less	39.1%	38.8%	37.7%	35.6%	33.6%	n/a	n/a
5 years or less	42.6%	42.0%	40.9%	38.3%	n/a	n/a	n/a

It takes almost 5 years for about 40% of the inmates to return to prison in South Carolina. Interestingly, every year that they are out, chances increase for them to return. With an average prison population of a little over 22,300,<sup>32</sup> that means slightly more than 8,900 of them are usually returnees. If those numbers are not enough, some current developments show there is room for improvement in South Carolina's approach to incarceration in general. In 2010 legislated reform measures may have looked promising, but they seemed

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31. All information taken from "South Carolina Department of Corrections Recidivism Rates of Inmates Released during FY2005-FY2010," <http://www.doc.sc.gov/research/SpecialReports/RecidivismRatesofInmatesReleasedduringFY2005-FY2010.pdf> and "South Carolina Department of Corrections Recidivism Rates of Inmates Released during FY2009-FY2011," [http://www.doc.sc.gov/pubweb/research/SystemOverview/SCDC\\_FAQs\\_February\\_2015.pdf](http://www.doc.sc.gov/pubweb/research/SystemOverview/SCDC_FAQs_February_2015.pdf) (accessed October 9, 2013).

32. Information taken from "SCDC Average Daily Facility Count per Month June 2013 – May 2015," [http://www.doc.sc.gov/pubweb/research/SystemOverview/SCDC\\_FAQs\\_September\\_2015.pdf](http://www.doc.sc.gov/pubweb/research/SystemOverview/SCDC_FAQs_September_2015.pdf) (accessed January 18, 2016).



to have backfired. Non-violent offenders were to receive decreased prison sentences or be placed on probation. Those who had committed serious offenses were to receive stiffer sentences. Some of the expected savings would be used to train prison personnel in their work with the more violent inmates. In 2012 the state had saved three million dollars,<sup>33</sup> but all was not well. By 2013, reports revealed that probation agents' workload increased. Instead of monitoring 50 cases, as in the national average, they now had to monitor 97 cases – putting the crime problem on to parole agents.<sup>34</sup> In addition, by 2014 it became clear that an aging prison population would continue to cause prison expenses to soar despite overall inmate reductions.<sup>35</sup> Also, the mindset that pervades the South Carolina Department of Corrections (SCDC) seems questionable. They have been cited for neglecting and abusing mentally ill inmates. Instead of looking for ways to make improvements, SCDC continues to pursue litigation not to reform.<sup>36</sup> In the end, if the more violent offenders are not rehabilitated; if the less violent ones are not monitored; and if the mentally ill ones are abused or neglected, the predicted outcome is clear: a significant number of them will return to prison.

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33. Nicole Flatow, "South Carolina Saved \$3M Last Year on 'Smarter' Prison Terms," <http://thinkprogress.org/justice/2013/01/17/1464031/south-carolina-saved-3m-last-year-on-smarter-prison-terms/> (accessed July 2, 2015).

34. "SC Sentencing Reform Reduces Numbers in Prison, Increases Probationers," <http://www.thecrimereport.org/new/crime-and-justice-news/2013-01-sc-sentencing-reform> (accessed January 18, 2016).

35. Paul Zoeller, "Rethink Sentencing and Parole to Solve Aging, Costly Prison Population," <http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20140902/PC1002/140909953/1022/rethink-sentencing-and-parole-to-solve-aging-costly-prison-population> (accessed July 2, 2015).

36. Andrew Cohen, "South Carolina Is Still Defending Its Neglectful Prisons," *The Atlantic* (January 23, 2014), <http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/01/south-carolina-is-still-defending-its-neglectful-prison/283260/> (accessed July 2, 2015).

## This Prison as the Research Site

Regardless of the approach of any program geared to reduce recidivism, it seems reasonable to incorporate some means of individualization. No program can meet every inmate's needs. Besides, individualized treatment plans have proven effective in reducing recidivism.<sup>37</sup> One need that may have to be addressed on an individual basis is the inmates' view of time. While imprisoned, many of them learn to *do time*. That is, they learn to expect little as they wait to be released. Provisions have to be made for the fact that the deliberate structuring of the inmates' day in the prison system affects their ability to plan a "coherent future" for themselves.<sup>38</sup> Expecting them to plan for a future when they are unable to plan for a large part of what happens to them on a daily basis is unrealistic. Macchia's program that includes structure and elements of individuation could be the means to keep the inmates from becoming overwhelmed or to flounder when looking for a starting place to make changes to reduce or eliminate the likelihood of their returning to prison. One salient point for using Macchia's text in ECI is that the workbook approach is the inmates' usual method for receiving information and providing reflections. Their work in the moral dimension with the support of a small group could provide the framework to help them change the trajectory of their lives. As Richard Rohr

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37. Elizabeth Maier, Peter Wicklund, Max Shlueter, and Alisha Nowiki, "Evidence-Based Initiatives to Reduce Recidivism: A Study Commissioned by ACT No. 2011-2012 Legislative Session State of Vermont," 54, [http://www.vcjr.org/reports/reportscrimjust/reports/ebiredrecid\\_files/DOCRR%20Lit%20Rev%20Report.pdf](http://www.vcjr.org/reports/reportscrimjust/reports/ebiredrecid_files/DOCRR%20Lit%20Rev%20Report.pdf) (accessed on May 18, 2013).

38. Ross and Richards, 4-5.

puts it, “The Gospel is before all else a call to live differently, so that life can be shared with others.”<sup>39</sup>

Despite being in prison, inmates can craft their own individual rule of life. After all, Macchia says, “It’s created of the raw material of our lives and it assumes no great wisdom or spiritual depth to understand...[I]t’s fulfilled in the simple routines of everyday life, bursting forth from a well-ordered heart and resulting in the well-ordered way.”<sup>40</sup> Certainly, the prison environment is exigent with its paucity of choices and many restrictions; yet, inmates make decisions every day about how they want to live their lives while imprisoned – negatively or positively. Crafting a rule of life would simply mean they would write down and review their decisions. Moreover, Macchia insists that this approach can be “adapted to present circumstances and shaped to fit current needs and desires.”<sup>41</sup> He beckons:

Cease the continual striving of a life of nonstop technology, noise, and activity. Stop looking exclusively to others’ ideas of how you are to live as a Christian. Instead, begin to listen to God with an attentive, reflective and discerning heart. In the context of your spiritual community, take the necessary time to discover afresh his invitation to the abundant life. This journey of personal discovery is sure to be life transforming for you and all whose path you gracefully cross.<sup>42</sup>

Unlike the community outside the prison, inmates have limited to no access to technology. However, during my time with the anger management group, I heard them complain about the incessant noise and activity in their dorms. I also heard several

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39. Richard Rohr, *What the Mystics Know: Seven Pathways to Your Deeper Self* (New York: Crossroad, 2015), chap.7, Kindle.

40. Macchia, 14.

41. Macchia, 14.

42. Macchia, 19.

members explicitly express or infer their Christian beliefs. When I found out that there were over 450 self-identified Christians at the institution, I hoped some of them would be willing to participate in the study to strengthen their Christian discipleship and work on changing their behavior in a structured way. Furthermore, I believed research groups could be formed at ECI that could transform the participants' lives and ultimately reduce recidivism in South Carolina – even if it happened only with the members of this project.

What makes Macchia's approach appealing and different from other self-help programs is his insistence that the rule of life should grow out of a relationship with God. It's designed to help participants lead a life based on internal motivations and promptings from the Holy Spirit instead of relying on external means.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, it sets the stage for spiritual transformation. Yet, I wondered if the inmates would be vulnerable enough to allow the Holy Spirit to work with and in them, or would they sign-up for the class simply because there was nothing else to do and give the shallow responses I had observed with the anger management group. Besides that, I wondered if they had enough self-awareness to fully participate. I had noticed that sometimes the chaplain, whom they knew and trusted, had to repeatedly probe when he facilitated the anger management group before they were able [or willing?] to respond with insightful answers to his reflective questions. I remained hopeful nonetheless.

Psychotherapist, Carl Rogers declares that it is possible for people to know themselves and then make strides in becoming the persons they would like to be.<sup>44</sup>

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43. Macchia, 163.

44. Carl Rogers, *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), intro., Kindle. Rogers' target audience for this book was what he called "the intelligent layman" (gender language his).

However, he also notes that some indispensable occurrences must happen before they can actually make changes to the *self*. They first have to accept their current experiences “without any attempt to own it as part of the self or to relate it to other material held in consciousness” before they can “formulate [themselves] out of [their] experiences, instead of trying to impose a formulation of self upon [their] experience.”<sup>45</sup> It was only after years of practice that Rogers could conclude that attempting to behave according to an ideal would prove unsuccessful in the long run. He insists that it is necessary for people to realize that the self is *not* the experience or their behavior.<sup>46</sup> After a session with one of his clients, he writes:

I believe she is saying to be herself means to find the pattern, the underlying order, which exists in the ceaselessly changing flow of her experience. Rather than to try to hold her experience into the form of a mask, or to make it be a form or structure that it is not, being herself means to discover the unity and and harmony which exists in her own actual feelings and reactions. It means that the real self is something which is comfortably discovered in one's experiences, not something imposed upon it.<sup>47</sup>

Yet, Rogers is not the first therapist to insist that in any program of transformation, it is important to recognize that the self is not the behavior.

Earlier Carl Jung also makes some distinctions about the self that appear crucial when considering individual transformation. He points out that there is a difference between the ego and the self.<sup>48</sup> He contends that while the ego is *part* of the self, it is not

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45. Rogers, pt. III, sec. 5.

46. Rogers, pt. III, sec. 5. One of his clients exclaimed, “I came here to solve problems, and now I find myself just experiencing myself.”

47. Rogers, pt. III, sec. 6.

48. Carl Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Volume 9, Part II, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* trans. R.F.C. Hull (New York: Princeton University Press, 1959), chaps. 1, IV, Kindle.

the self. (He never tries to determine how big of a part it is.) Jung explains that the ego is unique to the individual and helps to make up the person's conscious personality, noting that the self is composed of the conscious and unconscious parts of a person. For him, the ego and self continue to interact with one each other throughout life until eventually the ego serves the self. Until then, the ego, which starts to develop early in life as a result of the demands placed on it by its environment, can be hidden from others through the means of a *persona*. Jung defines the persona as "the individual's system of adaptation to, or the manner he assumes in dealing with the world" and says it is the covering or mask for "the face we never show to the world."<sup>49</sup> He continues, "One could say with a little exaggeration that the persona is that which in reality one is not, but which oneself as well as others think one is."<sup>50</sup> In the end, if the inmates have no means of identifying and/or dealing with their own persona, any attempt at transformation will probably be fraught with disappointment.

Bruce Scotton states that Carl Jung's work should be considered when discussing transformation because it remains the basis of the current focus in the psycho-therapeutic world.<sup>51</sup> A few of Jung's contributions, noted by Scotton, appear significant for this study. They comprise: (1) psychological development includes growth in consciousness and should continue in life; (2) the transcendent is within every person; and (3) healing and growth often result from the meaning given to symbols or states of consciousness

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49. Carl Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Volume 9, Part I, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* trans. R.F.C. Hull (New York: Princeton University Press, 1959), chap. III, sec. 2, pt. 2c, chap. I, sec. 43, Kindle.

50. Jung, *The Collected Works, Volume 9, Part I*, chap. III, sec. 2, pt. 2c.

51. Bruce W. Scotton, "The Contribution of C.G. Jung to Transpersonal Psychiatry" in *Textbook of Transpersonal Psychiatry and Psychology*, ed. Bruce W. Scotton, Allan B. Chinen, and John R. Battista (New York: Basic Books, 1996), chap. 5, Kindle.

beyond the rational mind.<sup>52</sup> Those concepts underlie Macchia's plan for crafting a rule of life by creating a climate conducive for and expecting growth while also taking into consideration that more than human mental assent might be required for lasting change.

Eugene Rollins' discussion on the self notes how limiting it is when a person masks the self. He insists that the mask can become a sub-personality that derails important needs. He says, "When a person no longer knows what she really wants, needs, or feels, her behavior can no longer be effective as a means of satisfying the basic need to be understood by others and the need to grow as a person."<sup>53</sup> Therefore, sometimes, the authentic self may not emerge until the point is reached where fundamental questions must be answered. Rogers noticed that underlying a myriad of reasons for why clients came to see him were the basic questions: "Who am I?" and "How may I become myself?"<sup>54</sup> He summarizes the process necessary to answer those questions:

In a favorable psychological climate a process of becoming takes place; that here the individual drops one after another of the defensive masks with which he has faced life; that he experiences fully the hidden aspects of himself; that he discovers in these experiences the stranger who has been living behind these masks, the stranger who is himself.<sup>55</sup>

At any rate, self-acceptance is essential. Without it, change cannot occur.<sup>56</sup>

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52. Scotton, chap.5.

53. Eugene C. Rollins, *The Masks We Wear* (Bloomington, Indiana: AuthorHouse, 2010), 13, 9.

54. Rogers, pt. III, chap. 6.

55. Rogers, pt. III, chap. 6. At this location, Rogers also says that the process of becoming a person does not only occur in therapy. This infers that a small group setting can also facilitate in a person discovering the self.

56. Rogers, pt. I, chap. 1.

Thomas Keating echoes Jung and Rogers in noting that people have more than one self. He explains that there is a *true self*, which is often elusive, and a *false self*. Keating says the false self is the image that people develop based on two things: programs for happiness and over-identification with a particular group. He continues explaining that the false self first starts to be developed in childhood and is basically the self who emerges as a means of survival due to real or perceived demands.<sup>57</sup> What his conclusions suggest, as Jung's does earlier, is although the inmates may participate in this study, they may be unaware of their own internal dynamics which could, in the end, prevent them from realizing their goals. Keating goes on to explain, "Human beings always act out of some belief system – whether it happens to be true or false, conscious or unconscious."<sup>58</sup>

Michael Singer says without intentional practices, there will always be a "constant draw" to what he calls the *lower self*.<sup>59</sup> He sees this false/lower self as nothing more than *an internal model* people themselves create based on past experiences.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, he maintains it should never be perceived as reality. Singer goes on to say, "If anything can cause disturbance inside of you, it means it hit your model. It means it hit the false part of you that you built in order to control your own definition of reality. There's nothing you can make up inside your mind that can ever be considered reality."<sup>61</sup> Richard Rohr also

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57. Thomas Keating, *On Divine Therapy* (New York: Lantern Books, 2012), chap. 1, Kindle.

58. Keating, *On Divine Therapy*, chap. 1.

59. Michael Singer, *The Untethered Soul: The Journey Beyond Yourself* (Oakland, California: New Harbinger and Noetic Books, 2007), 67, Kindle.

60. Singer, 129-134.

61. Singer, 135.



points out how people's internal beliefs can skew their perception of reality. He observes that people often identify themselves with their thoughts, self-image, and feelings.

However, he also contends they themselves are none of those things.<sup>62</sup>

Rohr makes one more point in discussing transformation that may be particularly applicable to inmates. He insists that the right to be successful, the right to be right, and the right to be powerful have to be relinquished.<sup>63</sup> It is easy to see how inmates, as well as anyone else, would have felt those rights at some point in their lives. These needs are not in and of themselves bad or questionable, but inmates may be reluctant to let them go in the interest of perceived personal safety. Yet, Rohr goes so far as to say unless these so called rights are identified and confronted, it would be safe to assume they are "still in charge."<sup>64</sup> If they are, then the research project, largely based on Macchia's program, is at risk. Although Macchia's curriculum provides opportunities for inmates to confront negative aspects of themselves in small group discussions, they have to feel safe in order to do so. In the end, Rogers' words are encouraging: "I have come to feel that the more fully the individual is understood and accepted, the more he tends to drop the false fronts with which he has been meeting life, and the more he tends to move in a direction which is forward."<sup>65</sup> Thus, this study can be one means of transformation for the inmates at ECI after all.

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62. Rohr, chap. 4.

63. Rohr, chap. 2.

64. Rohr, chap. 2.

65. Rogers, 595.

## Using Meditation in the Research Study

Meditation may be a way for inmates to move forward in new and different directions in their lives. One reason is that meditators have reported more openness in acknowledging their negative personal characteristics.<sup>66</sup> This may help the inmates participating in this project to admit things they were previously unable or unwilling to do. Peter Scazzero believes that combining emotional health with contemplative spirituality – of which meditation is a part – is crucial for transformation. His list of characteristics includes:

### Emotional Health -

- awareness of and control of feelings
- showing compassion
- developing close interpersonal relationships
- breaking destructive habits; resolving conflicts

### Contemplative Spirituality -

- surrendering to God's love
- practicing silence and solitude
- resting in God's presence
- developing a plan to allow awareness of the sacred<sup>67</sup>

It is conceivable that Scazzero's recommendations can support the thrust of Macchia's curriculum for facilitating spiritual transformation (i.e., developing a plan to allow awareness of the sacred) and addressing some of the needs for inmates while they are still in prison (i.e., control of feelings, breaking destructive habits, resolving conflicts).

Researchers from the National Institute of Health (NCIH) now report, "Meditation has a long history of use for increasing calmness and physical relaxation, improving

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66. Roger Walsh, "Meditation Research: The State of the Art" in *Textbook of Transpersonal Psychiatry and Psychology*, ed. Bruce W. Scotton, Allan B. Chinen, and John R. Battista (New York: Basic Books, 1996), chap. 17, Kindle.

67. Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: Unleash A Revolution In Your Life In Christ* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006), chap. 3, Kindle.

psychological balance, coping with illness, and enhancing overall health and well-being. Mind and body practices focus on the interactions among the brain, mind, body, and behavior.”<sup>68</sup>

The results of one NCIH study on *attentional blink* and meditation seem promising in addressing inmate behavior. Attentional blink happens when two pieces of information are presented in rapid succession, causing the latter not to be perceived because the brain focused on the former.<sup>69</sup> Since meditation has been shown to reduce it, its practice may help inmates learn not to react to a first impression (i.e., a perceived threat) long enough to attend to the second bit of information (a joke or a misunderstanding). Therefore, violent reactions may be reduced. Furthermore, since researchers in this study also believe that brain plasticity (the ability of the brain to adapt to demands placed on it) happens throughout life,<sup>70</sup> there is more hope that inmates can train their brains to respond to life in new ways as a result of the meditative aspects of centering prayer.

Another study that dealt with delayed reaction indicates that regardless of the type of meditation practiced, experienced meditators’ brains show less activity in their *default mode network* – the area associated with self-centered thinking. By using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scans, researchers learned that when the default

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68. National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, “Meditation: In Depth,” <https://nccih.nih.gov/health/meditation/overview.htm> (accessed March 28, 2016).

69. National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, “Meditation May Make Information Processing in the Brain More Efficient,” <https://nccih.nih.gov/research/results/spotlight/082307.htm> (accessed March 28, 2016).

70. National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, “Meditation May Make Information Processing in the Brain More Efficient” found at <https://nccih.nih.gov/research/results/spotlight/082307.htm> (accessed March 28, 2016).

mode network is active, so is the self-monitoring and cognitive control sections of the brain. They also noticed that the brain activity of experienced meditators appeared constant, whether they were meditating or not. As a result, these researchers surmise that perhaps they develop a new default mode that centers on the present moment instead of on the self.<sup>71</sup> Of note, a couple of studies with promising results overall in the field of meditation but not applicable for this particular project have shown that participants who were taught a Buddhist form of meditation known as compassion meditation, not only increased their empathetic responses to human suffering but also showed comparable neural responses when not meditating.<sup>72</sup> In the long run, it appears that meditation can help facilitate new behaviors in its practitioners, including participants in this study.

#### A Very Brief History of Meditation in Christianity

Centering prayer has been called *meditation* and *contemplation*. “It is not contemplation in the strict sense, which in Catholic tradition has always been regarded as a pure gift of the Spirit, but rather it is a *preparation* [author’s italics] for contemplation by reducing the obstacles caused by the hyperactivity of our minds and of our lives,” says Thomas Keating.<sup>73</sup> Although its roots can be traced to the practices of the Desert Fathers

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71. Catharine Paddock, “How Meditation Benefits The Brain,” <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/238093.php> (accessed March 28, 2016).

72. National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, “Meditation May Increase Empathy,” <https://nccih.hin.gov/research/results/spotlight/060608.htm> (accessed March 28, 2016) and National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, “Meditation Training Programs Shows Brain Effects Even Outside a Meditative State,” <https://nccih.nih.gov/research/results/spotlight/110112> (accessed March 28, 2016).

73. Thomas Keating, *Intimacy with God: An Introduction to Centering Prayer* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2009), x. Even though Keating and others make the distinction between the terms *mediation* and *contemplation*, they have all used them interchangeably in their writings. Therefore, for the purposes of this study *meditation* and *contemplation* will be used interchangeably to describe centering prayer.

and Desert Mothers of the third century, its recent popularity started in the 1970s when Trappist monks at St. Joseph's Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts noticed the influx of seekers exposed to eastern practices in their area looking for a nearby meditation site.<sup>74</sup> When Thomas Keating, the then Abbot, charged the monks to come up with a Christian alternative, Basil Pennington and William Meninger accepted. They based their teachings on a fourteenth-century anonymous work called *The Cloud of Unknowing*. That author espoused silent prayer starting with “a naked intent unto God” and reflected in the use of a sacred word.<sup>75</sup> Early developers of centering prayer were not at a loss for making silent prayer accessible to the general public because they had had a centuries-old tradition of praying silently and independently in their cells, whether they experienced contemplation as a supernatural gift from God or not. The modern touches they added were to suggest group praying and using a bell to signal the beginning and end of a 20-minute prayer session.<sup>76</sup> The general guidelines the monks developed for centering prayer remain simple: sit quietly; allow thoughts to come and go; and silently return to the sacred word as a sign of consent to God's presence and action during this time. They taught practitioners to choose their own sacred word or phrase – the simpler the better.

When workshops on centering prayer began, it was initially known as “the prayer of The Cloud” – a reference to *The Cloud of Unknowing* book – or as simply “a method

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74. For a more comprehensive history of contemplative prayer, see M. Basil Pennington, *Centering Prayer: Renewing An Ancient Christian Prayer Form* (New York: Image Books, 1980), 15-53 and Cynthia Bourgeault, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening* (Lanham, Maryland: Cowley Publications, 2004), pt. II, chap. 6, Kindle.

75. Evelyn Underhill, ed., *The Cloud of Unknowing*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Evinity Publishing, 2009), chaps. 3, 7, Kindle.

76. Cynthia Bourgeault, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening* (Lanham, Maryland: Cowley Publications, 2004), chap. 6, Kindle.

of contemplative prayer.”<sup>77</sup> Eventually, words from Thomas Merton led to a name change,

*At the center* [italics mine] of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusion, a point of pure truth, a point or spark which belongs entirely to God, which is never at our disposal, from which God disposes of our lives, which is inaccessible to the fantasies of our own mind or the brutalities of our own will. This little point...is the pure glory of God in us.<sup>78</sup>

Basil Pennington also speaks of God being at the center:

Beneath all our feelings, beneath our reasoning, beneath all our limitations, there is a deep Center, the Center and ground of our being, and we can pass through that Center into the very Center of God. Indeed, the two Centers are one – constituting the very Center of all that is. It is the creative Source, who can fulfill all our deepest and broadest and loftiest aspirations.<sup>79</sup>

Neither Merton nor Pennington is insinuating that the meditation prayer journey culminates in human beings realizing that they are the Center (God). Pennington explains, “The easiest way to come to God is to enter into our own center and then pass through that center into the center of God.”<sup>80</sup> Thus, the two centers are distinct. Thomas Keating also explains, “The unifying force of divine love draws and unites the soul into ineffable experiences of union and forgetfulness of self. God and the soul, however, remain two, since the soul is *aware* of itself in union with God.”<sup>81</sup>

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77. M. Basil Pennington, *Centering Prayer: Renewing An Ancient Christian Prayer Form* (New York: Image Books, 1980), 55.

78. Thomas Merton, *A Thomas Merton Reader*, ed. Thomas P. McDonnell (New York: Image Books, 1974), 346-7.

79. M. Basil Pennington, *Centered Living: The Way of Centering Prayer* (Liguori, Missouri: Liguori/Triumph, 1999), 21.

80. M. Basil Pennington, *True Self False Self: Unmasking the Spirit Within* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2000), 17.

81. Thomas Keating, *Intimacy with God: An Introduction to Centering Prayer* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2009), viii.

It is not always easy to describe human encounters with the Divine. Pennington goes on to describe some of the difficulties the writers of contemplative materials face as they try to integrate their learnings from various sources along with their personal revelations and experiences. He says, “These are, in fact, very complex notions, open to many understandings and nuances.”<sup>82</sup> Merton also acknowledges the challenges. “The inner depths of the spiritual life are mysterious and inexplicable,” he says.<sup>83</sup> In the end, participation is required in order to understand more about meditation. Keating explains, “No one understands contemplative prayer without some experience of it.”<sup>84</sup> As far as he is concerned, centering prayer has a two-fold purpose. He says, “Centering Prayer is both a relationship and a method to foster that relationship at the same time.”<sup>85</sup>

At any rate, modern monastic contemplative authors know from their tradition that centering prayer’s context is the ancient practice of *lectio divina*. For centuries, nuns and monks have selected a short passage of Scripture (*lectio*-reading); quietly repeated a word or phrase that captured their attention (*meditatio*-reflecting); offered a prayer to God based on the passage (*oratio*-responding); and then rested (*contemplatio*-resting), only being with the passage.<sup>86</sup> Keating maintains, “Centering Prayer is not a part of the method of *lectio divina*. It is rather a distinct method of prayer that emerges out of the same tradition. It is closely related to *lectio divina*, but not so much in its method as in the

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82. Keating, *Intimacy with God*, 14.

83. Thomas Merton, *Contemplative Prayer*, by Thomas Merton (1969, repr., New York: Image Books, 1996), 75.

84. Keating, *Intimacy with God*, 143.

85. Keating, *Intimacy with God*, 142.

86. Keating, *Intimacy with God*, 146. See also Bourgeault, 65-67.

developing relationship with Christ that *lectio divina* implies and fosters.”<sup>87</sup> Although centering prayer is not to be viewed as the end of the *lectio divina* process, goals for both are similar – to move the pray-er from discursive to silent meditation. Cynthia Bourgeault explains that centering prayer facilitates movement from cataphatic prayers (ordinary awareness using feelings, reason, and imagination) to apophatic prayers (beyond ordinary awareness).<sup>88</sup>

It is also important to note that centering prayer was never designed to be divorced from the Scriptures or the liturgy of the Church. Keating believes “contemplation will deepen one’s appreciation of the liturgy....The better prepared we are through contemplative prayer and action, the more profoundly will the presence of Christ in the Christian assembly reach into the depths of our being and transform us at every level.”<sup>89</sup> Keating continues by explaining that the resting of centering prayer is part of an organic process that will lead the practitioner back to the earlier stages of *lectio divina*.<sup>90</sup> The primary factor for the development of centering prayer in the monasteries and nunneries is that it seemed oftentimes to do what the sole practice of *lectio divina* failed to do. Thomas Keating reports:

I was aware that the method of Lectio Divina in most instances was not doing the job of bringing people, even cloistered monks and nuns, to the contemplative states of prayer that St. Teresa [of Avila] describes in her writings: infused recollection, the prayer of quiet, the prayer of union, and the prayer of full union. All are deepening experiences of the presence of God.<sup>91</sup>

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87. Keating, *Intimacy with God*, 139.

88. Bourgeault, chaps. 4, 6.

89. Keating, *Intimacy with God*, 83-4.

90. Keating, *Intimacy with God*, 140, 146-7.

91. Keating, *Intimacy with God*, xiii.



Keating also believes that centering prayer can help lay people who are constantly striving under the belief that *doing* something for God brings God pleasure and *thinking* about God is the same as praying. He sees centering prayer as the way for both groups – cloistered and lay – to enter the divine rest, moving from “simplified affective prayer into contemplation.”<sup>92</sup>

However the *rest* in God is realized, there are bound to be some pray-ers who wonder if they are called to the higher or deeper levels of praying – prayers beyond the vocal prayers. William Meninger explains that there are three stages of growth as Christians embark on what he calls a loving search for God – the purgative, illuminative and unitive way. Simply put, in the purgative way memorized prayers and requests for help are offered. In the illuminative way, the practitioner begins to realize God’s love and wants to return it; Meninger marks it as only the *beginning* of contemplative prayer. He recognizes the unitive way (“reserved only for special friends of God”) as contemplative prayer and insists all Christians are called to it.<sup>93</sup> Yet, he makes no clear distinction for when the illuminative (the *beginning* of contemplation) becomes the unitive (full contemplation) in his brief discussion. Still, Meninger insists that no one should be discouraged by the different categories. He concludes, “There are different levels of contemplative prayer. However, I do not think that we should be overconcerned about them. God will lead each of us, in his or her own way, as God wills.”<sup>94</sup>

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92. Keating, *Intimacy with God*, 139-141, 143.

93. William A. Meninger, *Contemplative Prayer and The Cloud of Unknowing: The Loving Search for God* (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 1994), 1-2.

94. Meninger, 95.

As far as the deeper levels of prayer go, Thomas Merton recognizes that other faiths and beliefs could possibly help Christians in this regard. Douglas V. Steere says of him,

Thomas Merton is not only open to the existentialist voices of our time but to the important but largely neglected contributions to the monastic culture which might come to us through the insights of fellow contemplatives among the Zen Buddhists, the Hindus, and the Muslim Sufis. He believed that these insights should increasingly be put at the disposal of Christian monks as they seek to prepare themselves for the deepest levels of Christian prayer.”<sup>95</sup>

Decades after Merton’s death, the correlations between the Christian and Buddhist faiths are also expressed by Thich Nhat Hanh, a Buddhist monk, in his introduction to Merton’s *Contemplative Prayer*. Hahn says, “Christians and Buddhists both realize that without concentration, without abandoning distracting thoughts, prayer and meditation will not bear fruit. Concentration and devotion bring calm, peace, stability, and comfort to both Buddhists and Christians.”<sup>96</sup> Merton himself could see how those who are not monks could benefit from monastic teachings. He says:

A practical non-academic study of monastic prayer should be of interest to all Christians, since every Christian is bound to be in some sense a man of prayer.... All Christians ought, theoretically at least, to have enough interest in prayer to be able to read and make use of what is here said for monks, adapting it to the circumstances of their own vocation. Certainly, in the pressures of modern urban life, many will face the need for a certain interior silence and discipline simply to keep themselves together, to maintain their human and Christian identity and their spiritual freedom.<sup>97</sup>

In the end, regardless of the faith or vocation, regardless of whether the approach to silent prayer involves concentration (Buddhists) or not focusing on anything but letting

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95. Douglas V. Steere, forward in *Contemplative Prayer*, by Thomas Merton (1969, repr. New York: Image Books, 1996), 12.

96. Thich Nhat Hanh, introduction in *Contemplative Prayer*, by Merton, 5.

97. Merton, *Contemplative Prayer*, 19.

thoughts come and go (centering prayer practitioners), the main goal of silent prayer is to quiet the interior life of the practitioner. The aim of this project is for practitioners to experience the benefits of the silent prayer that have been in the Christian tradition for centuries.

### Centering Prayer and the Rule of Life

Merton insists that Christianity should not be lived as a role played by the use of external rules, rituals, and dogmas. Yet, certain ethical behavior is expected of and by Christians. Merton goes on to explain how expectations can be realized in the life of believers:

All prayer, reading, meditation, and all activities of the monastic life are aimed at *purity of heart*, an unconditional and totally humble surrender to God, a total acceptance of ourselves and of our situation as willed by him....Yet am I sure that the meaning of my life is the meaning God intends for it? Does God impose a meaning on my life from the *outside*, through event, custom, routine, law, system, impact with others in society? Or am I called to *create from within*, with him, with his grace, a meaning which reflects his truth and makes me his 'word' spoken freely in my personal situation? My true identity lies hidden in God's call to my freedom and my response to him. This means I must use my freedom in order to *love*, with full responsibility and authenticity, not merely receiving a form imposed on me by external forces, or forming my own life according to an approved social pattern, but directing my love to the personal reality of my brother, and embracing God's will in its naked, often unpenetrable mystery [all author's italics].<sup>98</sup>

The freedom to choose to love God and others is created within before it becomes praxis.

The writer of *The Cloud* also speaks of a connection between practicing contemplation and ethical living. He sees contemplative prayer as the best means of attaining Christian perfection, which can be defined as a "sense of maturity, completion, or reaching a goal, often in terms of moral, ethical, or physical flawlessness" (*The New Interpreter's*

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98. Merton, *Contemplative Prayer*, 68.

*Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “Perfection”). He says, “That we should be perfect by grace as He [Jesus] Himself is by nature. That by virtue of this work a sinner truly turned and called to contemplation cometh sooner to perfection than by any other work.”<sup>99</sup> Later, to avoid the impression that only certain people are called to the work of perfection and contemplation, he continues, “He [God] giveth not this grace, nor worketh not this work, in any soul that is unable thereto. And yet, there is no soul without this grace, able to have this grace: none, whether it be a sinner’s soul or an innocent soul. For neither it is given for innocence, nor withholden for sin.”<sup>100</sup> Finally, he believes contemplation is a primary means of addressing sin in Christians’ lives. He concludes that it dries up “all the root and the ground of sin” which is still present even after confessions of faith have been made.<sup>101</sup> (Divine forgiveness is a basic tenet of Christianity.) Bourgeault adds how centering prayer assists with ethical expectations. She adds that centering prayer is the means whereby practitioners are “taken deeper than the levels of ordinary awareness and rational understanding and begin to reverberate in the ground of [their] being.”<sup>102</sup> This reverberation that starts inside can then be lived outwardly. Thus, centering prayer can aid in the formation and implementation of the rule of life work in Macchia’s program as God works below the levels of human consciousness to heal and to help the inmates.

### The Project’s Design

God’s grace will be available to the inmates in this study – whether they practice centering prayer or not. Nevertheless, all of them will face the challenge of discerning

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99. Underhill, chap. 15.

100. Underhill, chap. 34.

101. Underhill, chap. 28.

102. Bourgeault, chap. 6.

and obeying God's will for their daily lives. Richard J. Hauser, a Jesuit teacher, credits his being open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit throughout the day more so than the practice of any particular prayer method as the basis for his ethical living. He says it took him some time to notice a significant correlation between his daily life and his daily prayer:

I learned that if my heart were dominated by the Spirit during my daily activities, my heart would be dominated by the Spirit during prayer.... I am not saying that activity in itself is an obstacle to prayer, but only that activity not in tune with the Spirit is destructive to prayer. Activity in tune with the Spirit is the best possible preparation for personal prayer.... Prayer will remain difficult until we develop a rhythm of life that enables us to work in tune with the Spirit, thus experiencing the peace and joy that flows from the Spirit's presence. If we are living in tune with the Spirit during the day, it is easy to allow the Spirit to unite us to the Lord during prayer.<sup>103</sup>

It should be noted that although inmates are away from society outside of prison, they do live as part of a community inside prison walls. Macchia's curriculum of devising a personal rule of life is one way to live under the guidance of the Holy Spirit while imprisoned and help them live differently. The program is comprehensive, giving the inmates opportunities to look at major areas of their lives. Still, they must spend time praying and reflecting on the Scriptures and on their lives (past and present), as Macchia suggests, in order to grow spiritually during this season. I started this study hoping to work with them as they became more mature disciples of Christ and as they make behavioral changes that would eventually help them not return to prison.

I envisioned two research groups – an experimental group, who would learn and practice centering prayer, and a control group, who would not. I planned for each group to come from two separate dorms to prevent comparisons and biases. Inmates at ECI

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103. Richard J. Hauser, *In His Spirit: A Guide to Today's Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 65, 77.

usually only have contact with inmates in their dorms. I would teach but not practice centering prayer with the group. Because I am a female and would be working a male facility, for my safety, I would not be alone in a room with male inmates with my eyes closed. After conferring with other chaplains, it was suggested that no more than five members be allowed in either group to allow for support and optimal participation.

As the usual practice at this institution, the chaplain's office would advertise the study by producing a flyer asking for volunteers who wanted to strengthen their Christian discipleship. I planned to administer a pre-survey questionnaire to ensure that self-selected participants were Christians but were not current practitioners of centering prayer. With a toss of a coin, I expected to randomly select from which dorm we would select the control group and the experimental group members.

I planned to meet with both groups weekly for a total of 16 weeks – 12 weeks to discuss the development of their individual rule of life and a subsequent 4 weeks to discuss and monitor its implementation. All members would receive a textbook, *Crafting a Rule of Life: An Invitation to the Well-Ordered Way* by Stephen Macchia, a journal to record their reflections, and a folder for the weekly handouts I prepared that summarized the chapter and highlighted suggested reflections. In considering the prison's calendar along with the project's requirements, one chapter of the textbook would be covered weekly, with a few overlapping.

Since the experimental group would be practicing centering prayer, they would be given prayer logs so I could determine if they were diligent in their practices or not. They would have the option of committing to practice once or twice a day at the start of the sessions. At the end of the study, I would tally how many times they prayed to see if the

more they prayed, the better they were able to implement their rule of life. Also, at the conclusion, I planned to administer a post-survey questionnaire to determine: (1) if the inmates did devise a rule of life; (2) if centering prayer helped the members of the experimental group implement their rule of life better than members of the control group, and (3) if the participants believed the study strengthened their Christian discipleship. If this study proved helpful in facilitating the transformation of the inmates' lives, I hoped to replicate it for validation purposes and also to eventually present it at other prisons as a means of helping inmates help themselves reduce the recidivism rates in South Carolina.

The following summarizes the overall plans for this paper:

- In chapter 2, I will discuss the theological framework for this study.
- In chapter 3, I will summarize and compare the pertinent literature.
- In chapter 4, I will discuss the project's design and assess the instruments I used to capture data.
- In chapter 5, I will describe the problems I encountered doing this study in a prison, suggestions for future studies, and my personal reflections.

## CHAPTER TWO

### BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

#### Introduction

The simple act of prayer is often not simple. The words people use, the stance they assume, the person or object they speak to, and their inherent beliefs can produce countless variables for exploring the matter. None of that is lost in discussions about prayer in American prisons. Many inmates pray; many of them are Christians. Whether they pray with hopeful expectation or stoic resignation, the fact that they do says they at least value the act itself. What some of them may not realize is how much their modern practices and conversations about prayer echo ancient ones. For centuries people have tried to determine the correlation between the *what* and the *how* of prayer. Some of those early discussions in the Christian church were encapsulated in the phrase *lex orandi, lex credendi*. Cyprian Consiglio explains:

Translated simply, this means, ‘The law of prayer is the law of belief.’ Translated even more colloquially, it means ‘How we pray is how we believe’ and vice versa. The fact is that all our theological questions are also anthropological questions. Who we think we are, who we think God is, and what we think of the relationship between ourselves and God – each of these is crucial to our prayer life.<sup>1</sup>

Since this study has to do with observing the effects of centering prayer in the development of a rule of life by Christian inmates, two areas of consideration seem crucial – prayer and ethics. Because the inmates’ beliefs about prayer will invariably be demonstrated in their practice of it, a brief look at the history of the correlation between prayer and belief will be presented in this chapter. As part of that discussion, ethical

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1. Cyprian Consiglio, *Prayer in the Cave of the Heart: The Universal Call to Contemplation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), chap. 1, Kindle.



considerations will ensue. Next, I will discuss how I arrived at an exegetical premise that serves as a theological foundation for meeting ethical demands. Finally, the necessity of developing a Wisdom<sup>2</sup> approach to help facilitate the ethical requirements of the rule of life will be presented.

### The Relationship between Prayer and Belief

As the oldest branch of Christianity, the Catholic Church has been the first to explain its understanding of the interplay between prayer and belief. Avery Dulles reports that the roots of *lex orandi, lex credendi* can be found in the fifth-century document, *Indiculus gratiae*, written by Pope Celestine I. He wrote it to defend the Church's doctrine on the relationship between grace and free will. To strengthen the defense, lay monk, Prosper of Aquitaine, wrote an addendum appealing to the liturgy. As a follower of Augustine, Prosper knew a precedent had already been set. To support the practice of infant baptism, Augustine had previously written, "If anyone seeks for divine authority in this matter, though what is held by the whole Church, and that not as instituted by Councils, but as a matter of invariable custom, is rightly held to have been handed down by apostolic authority."<sup>3</sup> Prosper reasoned that the priests' prayers, presumably practiced since apostolic times, were the best orthodox indicators. Dulles notes, "When Prosper [writes]...he does not simply mean the Church's practice in praying. Rather, he means the way the Church is required to pray in view of the teaching of the apostles found in

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2. *Wisdom* is intentionally capitalized to differentiate it from the generic use of term and will be explained later.

3. Saint Augustine, "The Anti-Donatist Writings," in *Early Church Fathers: Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series I, vol. IV, Book IV, 24.32*, CD with link to <http://www.kwikmind.com>, accessed August 18, 2016; Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 231. Wainwright uses this translation: "A thing which is held by the universal Church and was not instituted by a council but has always been kept is rightly believed not to have been transmitted without apostolic authority."

Scripture.”<sup>4</sup> Prosper’s addendum opened the way for doctrinal assumptions to be made on the basis of worship practices.

Dulles goes on to point out that the link between prayer (worship) and belief (doctrine) is indeed present in the New Testament. He cites 1 Corinthians 16.22 (“Come, Lord Jesus!”) as an example of the Church praying its belief in the lordship of the resurrected Christ along with its doctrinal anticipation of his return.<sup>5</sup> As far as Dulles is concerned, hindsight shows that the bond between prayer and belief has been clear at times. “By teaching Christians how to pray, the biblical authors taught them what they should believe,” he says.<sup>6</sup> However, in the end, he concludes that Catholics have been open to the view that as the Church “prays, worships, and reflects on its faith in new and changing circumstances” (emphasizing *lex orandi*), it will gain new insights that may go beyond Scriptures – as long as those insights do not directly contradict the Bible. Meanwhile, he says Protestants have generally made scriptural exclusivity and explicitness as the basis for their beliefs (emphasizing *lex credendi*).<sup>7</sup>

Geoffrey Wainwright agrees with Dulles about the Protestant and Catholic differences. He concludes:

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4. Avery Dulles, *Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System, Exp. ed.* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 201.

5. Dulles, 202, 203-204. Dulles cites several other passages that he says illustrate doctrines already in place by the time the canon was formed. For example, he says Philippians 2.5-11 and Revelation 5.12-3 proclaim the divinity of Christ; Matthew 28.20 is an approved baptismal formula; and 1 Corinthians 11 is a Eucharistic expression. Dulles continues by citing instances where the liturgy helped church leaders defend against heresy, such as Irenaeus’ argument against the Gnostics’ insistence of matter being evil by noting the materiality of the elements used in communion; Ambrose’ warning against the subordinationism proposed by the Arians by noting the Trinitarian baptismal formula; and in the Optatus and Augustine debates with the Donatists about sinful ministers by concluding that priests are also expected to pray daily, “Forgive us our sins.”

6. Dulles, 202.

7. Dulles, 199-200.

In the question of worship and doctrine, we are faced with the basic problem which arises in any discussion of the Church. On the one hand, we may assume, in a rather Catholic manner, that the history of the Church has, under the divine guidance, taken the 'right' course: so that a description of the past is tantamount to a prescription for the present and future. But what do we then do in face of the historical facts of liturgical and doctrinal disunity among people who all claim to be Christian?...On the other hand, the contradictions of Christian history may speak to us, in rather a Protestant way, of the fragility and inadequacy of all human response to God.<sup>8</sup>

Despite differences, Christian discussions about prayer and belief often lead to ones about ethics. Wainwright sees this connection in Augustine and Prosper's arguments. He says,

Augustine and Prosper considered that the holiness of a Church indwelt and led by the Holy Spirit gave authority to its liturgical practice as a source of doctrine. At this point [in the history of the Church], the manner in which the Fathers assume 'the Church,' as distinct from 'heretical' or 'schismatic' groups, to be holy tends to beg the question. I should myself wish to stress the *ethical* [author's italics] component of holiness.<sup>9</sup>

Wainwright is not alone. Many Christians believe worship and ethics should at least correlate, even if one is emphasized more than the other at times. Although Wainwright concedes no "simple one-to-one relationship between liturgy and ethics," he does point out that "worship in its intended capacity [is] a meeting between humanity and God."<sup>10</sup> He seems to be inferring that ethical (holy) demands are part of those meetings with a holy God.

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8. Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 241.

9. Wainwright, 245. See Wainwright, 242-245 where he insists that true worship is contextual and requires on going reflection before it can be considered dogmatic. He proposes three tests, of which the ethical component is only one. The other two are the origin and the universality of a practice.

10. Wainwright, 245.

## Why Prayer and Belief Can Fail Ethically

Admittedly, within the current self-help culture, many people make lifestyle changes without the Christian ethos. In modern prisons, many inmates do, also. Many of them practice other religions and/or have access to some of the same self-help books available to the general public. Yet, despite the efforts of some, lasting or desired results will not be realized regardless of their prayers or beliefs. David Tracy says that all insight does not lead to change. However, he suggests that long-term change is possible when people run into what he calls *the classics* – writings, events, symbols, pictures. He explains,

Here we recognize nothing less than the disclosure of a reality we cannot but name truth...some disclosure of reality in a moment that...surprises, provokes, challenges, shocks and eventually transforms us; an experience that upsets conventional opinions and expands the sense of the possible; indeed a realized experience of that which is essential, that which endures....Their memory haunts us. Their actual effects in our lives endure and await ever new appropriations, constantly new interpretations.... If even once, a person has experienced a text, a gesture, an image, an event, a person with the force of the recognition: 'This is important! This does make and will demand a difference!' then one has experienced a candidate for classic status.<sup>11</sup>

Tracy's insistence that classics reveal truths is to warn that any theology which "shifts from a truth disclosed to mind and heart to an external norm for the obedient" will eventually become "mere 'fundamentals' to be externally accepted and endlessly repeated."<sup>12</sup> Emphasis on external behaviors is often not sustainable. As far as Tracy is

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11. David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York, Crossroad: 1981), 108-109, 115-116. Tracy sees the *classics* as phenomena that impart truth and from which meaning can be derived. See Tracy, 133 where he says, "Every classic is a text, event, image, person, or symbol which unites particularity of origin and expression with a disclosure of meaning and truth available, in principle, to all human beings." See Tracy, 200-201 where Tracy points out that he believes religious classics differ from other classics because they "demand interpretation."

12. Tracy, 99.

concerned, continual reflections are crucial for long-term growth. Once they stop, most often, so do opportunities for change. Tracy goes on to say, “All understanding is mediational in the sense of happening now as I face the question mediated from the past and projected with hope to the future. I am entering that history with a deep consciousness of it. I am willing to accept the risk that the subject matter of this particular text articulates a question worth asking and a response worth considering.”<sup>13</sup> Personal engagement, not parroting, is required for *the classic* to have continual meaning and impact.

Noticeably, Tracy’s conclusions about *the classics* occur within his discussion on religious pluralism. He argues that open spiritual conversations between those of different faiths can perform at least three functions. First, they can help participants discover, not only their differences but also their similarities. Second, they can help Christians give voice to some things of their own faith that they may have had previous difficulty articulating. Third, just as encounters with their own *classics* can cause members of a particular group to form new reflections, encounters with the *classics* of other groups through dialogue can also lead to new reflections and opportunities for change. Tracy goes on to say, “When the ability to listen is present, the fears of confrontation, conflict, [and] arguments are not shunned. Rather they are necessary dialectical moments in every serious analogical conversation.”<sup>14</sup> Thus, dialectical moments can be further opportunities for growth.

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13. Tracy, 102.

14. Tracy, 447.

Tracy's assertions suggest that no one group can definitively define or discuss the Divine – whether they all call themselves Christians or not. Nowhere might that be truer than in the one major agreement among Protestants and Catholics. That is, *God entered human history in the unique God-man, Jesus Christ*. How to interpret that event is not always agreed upon. Tracy proposes,

If we allow the interpretation of the religious classic to provide the first major guideline for an analysis of the Christ event, one fact becomes clear: The interpreter should allow for the recognition of the character of the Christ event as an event from the whole and by the power of the whole...the Christian interpreter of this classic event recognizes *in some present experience* of the event...as an event *from God* and by God's power. To speak religiously and theologically of the Christ event is ultimately to speak of an event from God.<sup>15</sup>

Recognizing the Incarnation as a God event is only the start of what that could mean for humanity, corporately and/or individually. To counter the diversity among Christians, Tracy encourages the open spiritual discussions mentioned earlier without fear of losing already held beliefs. He ventures, "The recognition that no classic tradition should abandon its particular genius in its entry into conversation with others is a central key for enhancing a genuinely ecumenical theology."<sup>16</sup> Still, the divisions among Christians concerning the Christ event made me uneasy.

Although I planned to work with only Christians, I wondered about the denominational differences. I was concerned about whether I would be accepted as a female clergy person. Would they see me as "Reverend Brewer" (how I introduced myself) or "Mrs. Brewer" (how the Baptist chaplain solely referred to me)? Would the experimental group practice centering prayer, or would they see it as a New Age

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15. Tracy, 234, author's italics.

16. Tracy, 448.

phenomenon? Would both groups – experimental and control – actively participate in the discipline required to form the rule of life, and see it as the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives? Would my plans to look at a Wisdom approach in the study prove helpful? Would the soteriology be subsumed in sophiology? I hoped having a theological basis for the components of the research would help quell my fears and more importantly help the inmates form new understandings and new habits of life.

### Another Way of Interpreting the Christ-Event

In *The Wisdom Jesus*, Cynthia Bourgeault makes a compelling argument for reflecting on Jesus' life and ministry. She contends that one of the reasons spiritual transformation does not happen as readily as expected is because many, if not most, Western Christians fail to see Jesus in a key way that he presented himself on earth – as a wisdom teacher. Their limited summary of the Christ event – *Jesus is the Savior of the world* – prevents them from seeing the importance of his role as a wisdom teacher.

Bourgeault asserts,

All this knowing *about* [italics mine] Jesus actually gets in the way.... It lulls us into a false sense of security: that we're on the winning team, that as Christians we'd recognize and know Jesus when he showed up. But even more problematically, this twenty-twenty hindsight takes away from us the key tool that we need to find and live the path today, *to connect with* [italics mine] this person that we seem to know so much about. This tool is our own power of inner recognition."<sup>17</sup>

As Tracy insists on a *present experience* and continual reflection, Bourgeault also insists on the need for Christians to recognize the living Jesus anew in discussing her transformation paradigm. She astutely observes that some of the people of Jesus' day accepted his teachings or saw him as a wisdom teacher *before* they knew how his story

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17. Cynthia Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus: Transforming Heart and Mind – a New Perspective on Christ and His Message* (Boston: Shambhala, 2008), chap. 1, Kindle.

would end. Not only did they notice that he taught differently than what they were used to hearing (i.e., Matthew 7.28-29, 22.33; Mark 1.22, 27, 11.28; Luke 4.32; cf., Luke 23.5; John 18.19), but Bourgeault insists they personally accepted what he said as truth. She believes the difference was that their hearts were open to him and refers to this as *a direct knowingness*. She goes on to explain: “Jesus asks repeatedly throughout the gospels, ‘Who do you say I am?’” which really means, ‘Who or what in you recognizes me?’ It is the crucial question.”<sup>18</sup>

Bourgeault’s arguments bear some consideration since Jesus’ first converts had no New Testament Scriptures and no written creeds to summarize what they knew or should know about Jesus. The various groups who purported to know the Scriptures of the Old Testament appear to be the most resistant to his teachings (i.e., Pharisees, ruler of the synagogue, teachers of the law, chief priests and/or scribes in Luke 5.17-21, 13.14, 19.47, 23.4-5; Matthew 21.23; Mark 11.18; John 18.19). They were not the only ones who struggled with his teachings. At one time, some of his disciples decided not to follow him anymore after he talked about being the bread from heaven (John 6.35-60). In the end, it appears that those who initially followed and remained did so because he functioned as a classic event for them. They continued to reflect on and accept what he said. When they ran into him, their lives were changed.

The magnitude of Jesus’ initial acceptance is shown most noticeably in the call narratives of some of his original disciples. They abruptly left their professions to follow him. Luke 5.1-11 reports that after Jesus “taught the people from the [Simon’s] boat” (Luke 5.3), he called Simon, James, and John, and “they left everything and followed

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18. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus*, chap. 1.



him” (Luke 5.11). Luke does mention that Jesus was at Simon’s house before this incident (Luke 4.38), but Matthew (Matthew 4.20, 22) and Mark (Mark 1.18, 20), who gives no record of this prior connection, both make a point of saying these first disciples followed Jesus “immediately.” In John’s Gospel, the same quickness is noted. After one of John the Baptist’s disciples, Andrew, hears John refer to Jesus as “the Lamb of God” (John 1.29-36), he and others immediately decide to follow Jesus home (John 1.37-39a). Verse 38 of the narrative gives a clue for what that encounter meant to these men: “When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, ‘What are you looking for?’ They said to him, ‘Rabbi (which translated means Teacher),<sup>19</sup> where are you staying?’” Not only did Andrew’s brief encounter with Jesus result in his bringing his brother Simon (John 1.42) to meet Jesus, but they both quickly see Jesus as their teacher. The pattern is repeated when Philip goes and gets Nathanael (John 1.45), who also calls Jesus “Rabbi.” John also credits Nathanael with being the first person after John the Baptist to recognize Jesus as “the Son of God” and “King of Israel” (John 1.49). It is not clear how long the interval was between these initial encounters with Jesus and the subsequent reflections. What is clear is that the Gospel writers present it as happening quickly and as being life-changing.

Bruno Barnhart describes how recognition of the living Christ can be replicated for Christians today:

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19. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing*, notes. Bourgeault often refers to Jesus as *moshel meshalim*. She says, the term “literally means a teacher of *mashal*, or parables. It covers much the same ground as the more familiar *rabbi*, but with a specific attunement to the Wisdom dimension of this calling that two thousand years of cultural history have now largely blunted. In the Near Eastern world into which Jesus came, a *rabbi* was neither a priest nor the leader of a spiritual congregation but rather a charismatic spiritual master...When we hear the word *rabbi* today, we tend to respond with an institutional association (a *rabbi* is an ordained person of the Jewish faith), losing the freshness and immediacy of the Wisdom context.” Bourgeault believes the term *moshel meshalim* “offers a more authentic evocation of the actual cultural context in which Jesus lived and moved and by which he was recognized.”

As we accompany Jesus through the gospels, we are present at one dramatic meeting after another. One person after another experiences a mysterious power in Jesus that, from this moment, changes the course of his or her life. If we are fully present at the moment when we read such a narrative, we ourselves experience the liberating power of this awakening....Peter and the other close disciples seem to discover Jesus not just once but repeatedly: ‘Who is this, that the wind and the sea obey him?’ And after Jesus has risen from the tomb, they have to learn to know him all over again. ‘Rabboni?’ cries Magdalene to the unfamiliar figure in the garden. Still to come are Paul’s encounter with Jesus on the Damascus road and the Seer’s vision, similarly overwhelming of the transfigured Jesus at the beginning of the Book of Revelation. In each of these recognition events, the Word can touch us at the core of our being. As we experience in the narrative this outer meeting with Jesus, a stirring and illumination within our heart reflect the inner birth that is taking place.<sup>20</sup>

Bourgeault writes that seeing Jesus primarily as a wisdom teacher now is possible largely because of several events in twentieth-century Christian scholarship. They were the discoveries of the Nag Hammadi Codex, the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Syriac manuscripts.<sup>21</sup> Bourgeault uses research findings from them, along with some teachings from Eastern Christians, to help formulate her ideas about spiritual transformation. Ultimately, she concludes that *Wisdom*<sup>22</sup> is the definitive path of transformation. She quickly insists that her conclusions are not labeled as reflections she gathered from reading the Hebrew wisdom literature (Ecclesiastes, Job, Proverbs, and some Psalms). Instead, she defines *Wisdom* as “a precise and comprehensive science of spiritual

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20. Bruno Barnhart, *Second Simplicity: The Inner Shape of Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), pt. 2, chap. 3, Kindle.

21. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus*, chap. 2 where Bourgeault says the four streams “suggest that we are long overdue for a fundamental reevaluation of our understanding of the Jesus event.” She discusses: (1) The Nag Hammadi Codex, which contains the Gospel of Thomas and on which she relies heavily as proof of Jesus’ role as a wisdom teacher; (2) the Syriac studies, which produced oral traditions, “which was a drastically different take on who Jesus was and what his mission was all about”; (3) the Qumran cache, which shows that much of what Jesus “had to say was already deeply present in the apocalyptic yearning and ferment of the Judaism of his times”; and (4) the recovery of the contemplative dimension of Christianity. See also Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus*, chap. 2 where she writes, “Meditation...opens up that place of immediate knowingness...where we can directly experience the living Jesus.”

22. Bourgeault capitalizes *Wisdom* to designate it as a school of thought.

transformation” that involves theory (“a comprehensive vision of our human purpose and destiny”) and practice (“systematic training for growing into that purpose”).<sup>23</sup> Bourgeault explains:

[Wisdom] is concerned with the transformation of the whole human being. Transformation from what to what? Well, for a starter, from our animal instincts and egocentricity into love and compassion; from a judgmental and dualistic worldview into a non-dual acceptingness. This was the message that Jesus, apparently out of nowhere, came preaching and teaching, a message that was radical in its own time and remains equally radical today.<sup>24</sup>

One of the ideas Bourgeault takes from her studies of Eastern Christianity is that they did not focus on soteriology. She says, “For the earliest Christians, Jesus was not the Savior but the Life-Giver” and “to be saved was ‘to be made alive.’”<sup>25</sup> Soteriological conclusions would be made later when the Church summarized its creedal beliefs. In briefly differentiating the sophiological and soteriological outlooks, Bourgeault says:

A sophiological Christianity focuses on the [wisdom] path. It emphasizes how Jesus is like us, how what he did in himself is something we are also called to do in ourselves. By contrast, soteriology tends to emphasize how Jesus is different from us – ‘begotten, not made,’ belonging to a higher order of being – and hence uniquely positioned as our mediator.<sup>26</sup>

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23. Cynthia Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing: Reclaiming an Ancient Tradition to Awaken the Heart* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), intro., Kindle.

24. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus*, chap. 1.

25. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus*, chap. 2. Bourgeault also points out in cited chapter that *soteriology* is a Greek, not Aramaic, word. Thus, her discussion starts with the Hellenistic influence on the Gospel texts and how it can veil other ways of seeing Jesus. She, then, credits the soteriological emphasis in the West first to the Apostle Paul. She notes that after this meticulous follower of the Jewish Law met the living Christ on the Damascus road, he believed himself forgiven and saved. Next, she discusses how Augustine’s personal experience of Christ finally freed him from attempts to save himself. She goes on to say that his realization of the “the contrast between human darkness and the light of Christ eventually found expression in his doctrine of original sin.”

26. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus*, chap. 2.

Bourgeault's arguments are not intended to set up an *either/or* dichotomy between soteriology and sophiology. She is attempting to recapture some early Christian beliefs to address "why the psychotherapeutic mindset of our times and the pursuit of individual wellness and fulfillment so persistently fail to satisfy."<sup>27</sup> Her own personal pursuit became instrumental in her discoveries. She explains, "I'm first and foremost a seeker, and in my own journey, the most important thing I had to learn was not what to seek, but *how* [author's italics] to seek."<sup>28</sup>

It seems Bourgeault's diverse background directly contributed to her openness to assimilate various points of view into a paradigm for transformation. She was raised as a Christian Scientist, which she describes as "a highly mental religion," but was also sent to a Quaker elementary school, where she practiced the contemplative discipline of silence weekly.<sup>29</sup> These divergent approaches continued without any hopes of the possibility of reconciliation until as a young adult she visited the Chartres Cathedral. Poignantly, she later learned that Chartres used to be one of the leading Wisdom centers in Europe. However, the day she entered the cathedral, she experienced a sense of what she describes as "profundity, beauty, and Mystery."<sup>30</sup> Still, a journey into the Catholic

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27. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing*, intro.

28. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus*, chap. 1.

29. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus*, chap. 1.

30. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing*, intro. See Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing*, chap. I where she says Wisdom centers are "places where people have been raised to a higher level of understanding, partly by enlightened human beings and partly by direct guidance from above.... Wisdom has flowed like a great underground stream from these schools, providing guidance and nurturance, as well as occasional sharp courses corrections to the flow of human history."

tradition and finally ordination as an Episcopal priest did not assuage her yearning for something more. She says:

While I loved the liturgy and the devotional aspects of the church, I also felt there were huge holes in its theological understanding and its practical teachings on spiritual formation. That propelled me toward esoteric work. I found my way to a Gurdjieff group, to which I belonged, on and off, for nearly a decade. There, however, I experienced the exact mirror image: the missing cosmological and practical teachings were all in place, but minus any sense of reverence or devotion. These two halves of the puzzle finally came together when at Saint Benedict's Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado, I met my teacher, a hermit monk who had fused the esoteric and Christian mystical within his own being and could teach me from a place of real understanding. After that immersion, I went back to both my Christian and my esoteric sources and found I could read them with a new heart I began teaching Christian contemplative practice from a Wisdom perspective.<sup>31</sup>

Bourgeault's experiences seem to give credence to her belief in "the principle of synchronicity: meaningful patterns of coincidence."<sup>32</sup> The meaningful coincidences in her life kept leading her to yearn for deeper insight. He states, "As we learn to open ourselves deeply to this mysterious Source, help will always come, for the Source 'leans and harkens toward us' with a tenderness of love that is both the medium and the message."<sup>33</sup> Christianity has long held that the medium and the message is Jesus. Bourgeault concludes:

Whatever theological premises you may or may not choose to believe about Jesus, the primary task of a Christian is not to believe theological premises but to put on

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31. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing*, intro, chap. II. Bourgeault says G.I. Gurdjieff (c.1866? – 1949) began looking for teachings from the ancient Wisdom schools in his early teen years. After traveling and searching for twenty years, he found what he was looking for in Central Asia. He developed a system that "involved cosmology, sacred movement, and practical work on the self," but she cautions, it is "highly intellectualized and somewhat secretive [and] not to everyone's taste."

32. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing*, chap. II.

33. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing*, chap. II. Bourgeault acknowledges the phrase, "leans and hearkens towards us" from John Donne, "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning," Poetry Foundation, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/44131> (accessed August 30, 2016).

the mind of Christ.... In Jesus, everything hangs together around a single center of gravity, and you need to know what this center is before you can sense the subtle but cohesive power of the path he is laying out....Paul...chooses...Philippians...to describe what 'the mind of Christ' is all about.<sup>34</sup>

Although Bourgeault's studies and findings made a difference in her life and suggested that inmates in an experimental group could realize some of the same, I had some reservations. While duplication of her contemplative practice of centering prayer and her revelations about the Wisdom path could possibly help them, I had to admit there was no record that any of Jesus' first disciples ever practiced silent prayer or had the benefit of Bourgeault's deeper truths. Yet, their lives did change as a result of encountering him. I also wondered how efficacious the development of the rule of life would be for the control group. After all, Scriptures abound that point to the ethical requirement for living the Christian faith (e.g., Deuteronomy 30.19-20; Isaiah 41.10; Galatians 5.19-21; Colossians 3.12-14; Ephesians 4.1-6; 2 Timothy 5.19-21) that many Christians do not see realized in their lives. However, that was one of the things this study was trying to change – to find a way to help the inmates not only see changes in their lives but see enough of a change that they would not return to prison.

As I sought a theological foundation for this study, a few Scriptures, in particular, continued to point to the biblical hope that change is indeed possible. First of all, Romans 12.1-2<sup>35</sup> with its obvious discussion of spiritual transformation ("Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds") as a means of

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34. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus*, chap. 1, chap. 6.

35. "I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God-- what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12.1-2).

demonstrating the result of surrendering our lives to God (“present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God”). Also, John 15 with its metaphor of the vine (Christ) and branches (Christians) infers that spiritual transformation has already been established in the life of believers. Perhaps, if the inmates could learn about that provision, they would have the basis for connecting their beliefs to their behaviors.

In the end, Macchia and Bourgeault together suggested the framework that kept beckoning to me. Macchia talks of the rule of life being like a holistic trellis that guides us with the promptings of the Holy Spirit. He points back to the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve’s “only requirement was to listen and obey” as they cared for the garden (their mission) and as they lived with each other (relationship with others).<sup>36</sup> Bourgeault speaks of Jesus as our example for the importance of listening and obeying God. She says,

It seems safe to assume that Jesus was a contemplative, by which I meant that the intentional alternation between contemplation and action is one of the fundamental rhythms of his being. At all the great junctures of his life – in the first temptations in the wilderness, in his withdrawal to the far shores of Lake Galilee immediately preceding the miracle of the loaves and fishes, at his transfiguration on Mt. Tabor and at the final anguish in the garden of Gethsemane – his pattern is to withdraw into solitude to listen more deeply to the word of God and unite his being to the divine Will.<sup>37</sup>

Yet, Macchia’s warning – “Rather than waiting on God to inform our hearts and direct our steps, we prefer following our own ideas about how to live”<sup>38</sup> – pointedly speaks to our natural propensity to live life on our own terms. That idea, coupled with Bourgeault’s

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36. Stephen A. Macchia, *Crafting a Rule of Life: An Invitation to the Well-Ordered Way* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2012), 16-17.

37. Cynthia Bourgeault, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening* (Lanham, Maryland: Cowley Publications, 2004), chap. 6, Kindle.

38. Macchia, 16.

explanation about the importance of inner work: “My guiding understanding has been that inner work is a way of accepting the profound invitation (in Philippians 2.5) to ‘have in yourselves the same mind as Christ’”<sup>39</sup> gave me hope and helped me conclude that any change in the inmates’ lives would have to have an interior start. I reasoned that if they could somehow develop *the mind of Christ*, they could think differently, and if they could think differently, then maybe they would behave differently. They could act like Christians; they could act like Jesus by daily surrendering their lives to God. Therefore, I selected the passage that includes Philippians 2.5 (“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.”) – Philippians 1.27-2.18 – to undergird a discussion of how Jesus as the example and means through the power of the Holy Spirit could effect ethical changes in the inmates’ lives whether they were part of the experimental or control group. (Again, I expected the experimental group to have an easier time making the changes.)

#### Historical and Scriptural Context of Philippians 1.27-2.18

Philippi was a Roman city about ten miles inland from a major trade route in the province of Macedonia (northern Greece today). Since Paul does not say exactly where he is imprisoned in this letter (Philippians 1.7, 1.13, 1.14, 1.17), it is difficult to pinpoint the composition date. Raymond Brown suggests, “56 if from Ephesus, 61-63 if from Rome, or 58-60 if from Caesarea.”<sup>40</sup> That would mean Paul writes Philippians after he has been in ministry for at least a little over twenty years. In Acts 16, Luke reports on Paul’s first visit to Philippi and how it came to be. He says Paul and Silas were delivering

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39. Bourgeault, *Centering Prayer*, intro.

40. Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 483-4.



the results of the meeting of the Jerusalem Council.<sup>41</sup> They had previously tried to go to Asia but were prevented by the Holy Spirit (Acts 16.6-7). Then, one night Paul had a vision of a man calling him to come to Macedonia (Acts 16.9). “Being convinced that God had called [them] to proclaim the good news” to the people of Macedonia, they went (Acts 16.10). They landed in Philippi, and their first converts were a woman named Lydia and members of her household (Acts 16. 11-15). An encounter with a slave girl led to their next converts. When Paul cast a spirit of divination out of the girl, causing her owners to bring charges for their loss of revenue, the believers were beaten and imprisoned. After an earthquake shook the doors of the prison open and the chains fell off of the prisoners, the jailer was so moved, he wanted to know what he needed to do to be saved. Subsequently, he and members of his household responded to the Gospel and became believers (Acts 16.16-34). Later, after Paul and Silas were released and asked to leave Philippi, they went on to Thessalonica (Acts.16.35-40; cf., Acts 17.1). Despite the difficulties Paul experienced in Philippi, his ministry was so instrumental there that over a century later, Polycarp would speak of their thriving faith.<sup>42</sup>

Philippians follows the basic form of an ancient letter, but scholars are not in agreement about its outline. Debates started as early as the seventeenth century and have

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41. According to Acts 15, Paul and Barnabas met with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem to discuss whether it was necessary for the Gentile converts to keep certain aspects of the Jewish law (i.e., circumcision, dietary restrictions, sexual conduct). With the guidance of the Holy Spirit (15.28), the council finally decided that the new converts, whom they concluded had been “saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus” should therefore only “abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication” (15.29).

42. Brown, 484; Polycarp, “Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians” found at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0136.htm> (accessed August 23, 2016). Polycarp wrote a letter to the Philippians with words of encouragement and guidance. He commended them, speaking of how they had “followed the example of true love” by supporting those who had been imprisoned. H also mentioned that “the strong root of [their] faith spoken of in days long gone by” had continued.

continued into the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup>.<sup>43</sup> Although the position for this paper is to consider it a unified letter, the form-critical debates may reveal some exegetical decisions beyond the present scope. Here, the emphasis will be on the exhortation section where (1) the Gospel calls for believers to live as a community (1.27-2.4); (2) Christ is the example of how to live according to the Gospel (2.5-11); and (3) God helps individual believers live according to the Gospel (2.12-18).

#### The Gospel Calls Believers to Live Together as a Community, (1.27-2.4)

With his introductory phrase in verse 27 (“Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ”), Paul harkens to a key point in this epistle and in his life – the Gospel. In his usual prayer of thanksgiving, he talks about his joyful prayers for the Philippians because they have continued to share “in the gospel” with him (1.5). Even though he is in prison because of his defense of it, he focuses on the fact that what has happened to him has “helped to spread the gospel” (1.12). He notes that some ministers proclaim the Gospel out of love but others out of “envy and rivalry” or “selfish ambition” (1.15-17). Yet, what matters most to him is that “Christ is proclaimed” (1.18); that is, the Gospel is being shared. As he continues, it becomes clear that Paul’s life revolves around the Gospel. He tells the Philippians that he has thought about dying (“dying is gain” and “my desire is to depart and be with Christ”) but finally decides to live in order to see and work with them again (1.21-24). Eventually, he concludes that he expects to continue “speaking with all boldness” so that Christ is “exalted now as always in [his] body,

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43. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians*, Word Biblical Commentary rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2004), xxx-xxxiii; Brown, 498. Hawthorne and Martin conclude: “Compilation theories solve nothing. They merely shift the problem of order and organization from Paul to an unknown editor and raise questions impossible to answer.” Although Brown agrees saying compilation theories are “not of great importance to most readers,” he later suggests they may be considered for further reflection.

whether by life or by death” (1.20). His final decision rests on the fact that he wants to see their “progress and joy in the faith” (1.25, NIV) when he returns to see them again (1.26). By the time Paul gets to verse 27, it is obvious that his words of encouragement for the Philippians to live “worthy of the gospel” is undergirded with his own sense of the importance of the Gospel.

Daniel Migliore observes the pattern that Paul usually summarizes the Gospel before he makes exhortations. He says, “In this and in his other letters, whether explicitly or implicitly, the indicative of what God has graciously done for us in Jesus Christ lies behind Paul’s every imperative of what we are summoned and urged to do.”<sup>44</sup> In this instance, before Paul urges the Philippians to live a life worthy of the Gospel, he has already reminded them they have the power to do so because of God. Back in verse 6, he says, “I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ” (c.f., 2.13). At any rate, his encouragement for the Philippians to “live in such a way that [they] are a credit to the Message of Christ” (*The Message Bible*) can serve as a heading for this section of the letter (1.27-2.18).<sup>45</sup>

Hawthorne and Martin note that verse 27 is part of one long sentence (1.27-30), where Paul uses a couple of unusual verbs. The first is the πολιτεύεσθε.<sup>46</sup> Although a common definition is simply “to conduct one’s life,” in this instance it could mean to

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44. Daniel L. Migliore, *Philippians and Philemon*, Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 66.

45. Peter T. O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), 143.

46. Hawthorne and Martin, 68-69. According to Hawthorne and Martin, this verb is only used here and in Acts 23.1. They note that Paul uses it instead of his usual περιπατέω found in Romans 6.4; 1 Corinthians 3.3; 2 Corinthians 5.7; Galatians 5.16; Philippians 3.17; and 1 Thessalonians 2.12.

“discharge your obligations as citizens.”<sup>47</sup> Hawthorne and Martin explain what it meant to live as citizens in a Roman colony at the time of Paul’s letter:

To the ancient Greeks, the state was by no means merely a place to live. It was rather a sort of partnership formed with a view to having people attain the highest of all human goods. Here in the state the individual citizen developed his gifts and realized his potential, not in isolation but in cooperation. Here he was able to maximize his abilities, not by himself or for himself but in community and for the good of the community.”<sup>48</sup>

Paul’s audience would have easily grasped the political undertones of the verb, πολιτεύεσθε. The demands of the empire were pervasive. Paul wants them to transfer the citizen concept to their faith in the Gospel. Since they are now also citizens of God’s kingdom, they should live according to its dictates. Faith is no private affair for him. There is no hint that they should compartmentalize their lives. He gives them guidelines for a new way of living with *all* of their neighbors – Christians or not. “This admonition is [to be] comprehensive, covering every aspect of the readers’ lives.”<sup>49</sup>

The other verb of note in this section is πτορόμενοι. Hawthorne and Martin report it is occasionally used in classical Greek to describe when timid horses are startled, suggesting Paul does not want the Philippians to “lose control of themselves as a result of the attacks of their adversaries.”<sup>50</sup> Because they are experiencing opposition (1.28), Paul warns that they need to develop a strong group ethic. Hawthorne and Martin conclude that as representatives of those who live according to the gospel, it is of “extreme

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47. Frederick William Danker, ed., *A Greek Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (BDAG)*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 846.

48. Hawthorne and Martin, 69.

49. O’Brien, 143, 145.

50. Hawthorne and Martin, 72.

importance for [them] to coexist in community, work together in harmony, and resist the common enemy with common intention.”<sup>51</sup> Their unity is not only for the sake of internal group cohesion. O’Brien adds, “The Philippians are to stand united in their struggle for the cause of the faith – its spread and growth, the same goal that was set before all of Paul’s work.”<sup>52</sup> Despite not naming his opposition directly,<sup>53</sup> the fact that he is writing to the Philippians from prison drives his point about the significance of the Gospel. It is relevant. Their situation may be different, but they “are engaged in the same struggle for the gospel” as Paul.<sup>54</sup>

The next part of Paul’s sentence (1.28b) is ambiguous (“For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation”).<sup>55</sup> However, it may allude to the fact that Paul is able to look beyond his own dour circumstances of being imprisoned to consider the eventual outcome of God’s work in the world. Migliore concludes,

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51. Hawthorne and Martin, 70; O’Brien, 150; Migliore, 68. Commentators agree on the importance of group unity but arrive at their assumptions differently. Hawthorne and Martin’s conclusion hinges on what they see as the careful construction of the parallel phrases ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι (“with one spirit”) and μιᾷ ψυχῇ (“with one mind”). They suppose that Paul means to render the two concepts – *mind* and *spirit* – equal. Migliore, on the other hand, would capitalize *Spirit* saying, “Paul is speaking here not of a sense of belonging together generated by the community itself. Instead, he is thinking of the Spirit as the gift of God’s own uniting power. Paul leaves no ambiguity about the source of Christian faith and life or of the unity of believers.” Although O’Brien would not capitalize *spirit*, he assumes the cohesive element for the Philippians would be that they are to stand in “one common purpose.”

52. O’Brien, 149, 152.

53. O’Brien, 153. Later, in chapter 3 Paul does seem to infer that some of the Philippians’ opposition could have come from Jews who had become Christians as indicated by his objection to those who insisted on the rite of circumcision. However, O’Brien assumes not. He believes the opposition is from their pagan neighbors or provincial officials based on the fact that in 1.28 Paul says their opponents were on the road to destruction” and in 1.30 Paul’s mention that the Philippians are undergoing “the same struggle” as he also suggest that the opposition is from outsiders.

54. O’Brien, 154.

55. Hawthorne and Martin, 71-75; O’Brien, 154-157; Migliore, 70. The disputed meaning of this sentence is beyond the scope of this discussion. The dispute largely arises from the interpretation and connotation of the words ἀπωλείας (destruction) and σωτηρίας (salvation). Some see both words applied to the Philippians. Others see ἀπωλείας applied to the Philippians’ opponents but σωτηρίας referring to the

This does not mean, of course, that the Philippian Christians and their opponents perceive what is happening in the same way.... As far as the opponents are concerned, the Philippians' refusal to conform would seem foolish and deserving of the destruction they are bringing on themselves. Paul, however, encourages the Philippian Christians to see God's hand at work in what they are going through. 'This is God's doing,' he assures them (1.28b). Their steadfastness in the faith in the face of persecution is a sign not of their coming destruction, as their opponents think, but of their coming salvation.<sup>56</sup>

In any event, the opposition they are facing, the unity they are to demonstrate, and the salvation they are experiencing should all be considered together. Paul is saying to them that all of it is "under the sovereign control and purpose of God."<sup>57</sup>

Finally, when Paul mentions the Philippians' suffering again ("since you are having the same struggle that you saw that I had and now hear that I still have"), he urges them to see it as a privilege (1.29-30). He refuses to present a naïve, one-sided view of Christianity but instead uses this as another opportunity to build solidarity within the community and with him.<sup>58</sup> Paul then gives the Philippians guidance on the attitude they should have when experiencing troubles. He says sufferings should be "endured for the sake of Christ" and, as a result, with joy.<sup>59</sup> Migliore summarizes, "We must keep in mind

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Philippians themselves. Migliore notes the ambiguity and refers to O'Brien as the voice for most commentators.

56. Migliore, 70.

57. O'Brien, 152.

58. Migliore, 71-72, 73-74. Migliore points out that Paul neither takes the time to explain the origin of or the reason for the allowance of evil in the world by God, nor encourages a form of martyrdom here. He notes, "Christ has already died for us and our salvation, and believers have already been baptized into his death (Romans 6.3). Salvation is God's gift and not a reward for our being martyred. ... The suffering Paul is experiencing and knows the Philippians are experiencing too is ... suffering that comes as a result of faithful proclamation of the gospel and service in the name of Christ."

59. O'Brien, 162.

that Paul sees every aspect of Christian life in relationship to the life, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”<sup>60</sup>

Although verses 1-4 of chapter 2 are often linked with verse 5, they can also be viewed as a continuation of the thoughts expressed in 1.27-30, where Paul encourages the congregation to stand against external influences. Here, in these first four verses of the second chapter, he speaks of some internal considerations they should notice. His starting with *if* seems to present a hypothetical proposal, but that is probably not the case. The fact that he uses  $\epsilon\iota$  instead of  $\epsilon\alpha\nu$  implies that he already knows those characteristics (“encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy”) are prevalent in the community.<sup>61</sup> The grace they have received as a result of their faith makes it possible for them to remain united, and Paul urges them to do so (2.2 – “make my joy complete”). Arguably, the repetition of the plea for unity in 2.2 (“be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind”) is cloaked in virtuous language.<sup>62</sup> Migliore points out,

Mutual encouragement, mutual consolation, mutual sharing, mutual compassion, and joy in the midst of suffering are markers of this new life together under the lordship of Christ. We might call these markers a sampling of the virtues of new community in Christ.... [T]hese virtues of the Christian life have their ultimate

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60. Migliore, 71.

61. David L. Bartlett, “Philippians 2.1-13: Exegetical Perspective” in *Feasting on the Word*, Year A, vol. 4, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 111; Migliore, 76; O’Brien, 165. Migliore and O’Brien agree that the *if* clauses should be considered *since* clauses instead.

62. Bartlett, 111. Bartlett notes parallelism between this appeal and that made regarding Euodia and Syntyche: “be of the same mind” (2.2) and “I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord” (4.2). He says there is no way of knowing whether Paul’s plea for church unity is as a result of the discord between the two women or whether their feud is indicative of church disunity in general.

source and continuing power from the living Christ who by the Holy Spirit creates and sustains the community and its members.<sup>63</sup>

Paul's appeal for unity serves as a counterpoint to the warnings in verses 3-4 ("Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit" or "Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interest of others"). Migliore sees the controlling feature for the Philippians' actions in this section (2.1-4) and in the next (2.5-8) rests in Paul's mention of *humility* (ταπεινοφροσύνη)<sup>64</sup> as a virtue for them to practice ("in humility regard others as better than yourselves"). He explains,

As Paul understands humility in the light of Christ, it describes those who know themselves to be radically dependent on the grace of God and who are therefore freed to place the needs of others above their own self-interests. For Paul, the gospel brings about a decentering and recentering of human life. To be in Christ is to be human in dependence on and with thanksgiving for the grace of God that is manifested in care and regard for others.<sup>65</sup>

In the end, Hawthorne and Martin conclude that Paul is telling the Philippians they have a responsibility to remain united. They also see humility as the key to help the members of the community "regard others as better" than themselves (2.3). They go on to say, "Naturally one does not think this way. But the divine command directed, not toward all but to the Christian community, implies divine assistance to achieve the impossible. Such an attitude of utter respect for one another guarantees unity and binds believers

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63. Migliore, 76. 64. Danker, 989. *Humility* is explained as "of the motivating cause" which suggests ethic.

64. Danker, 989. *Humility* is explained as "of the motivating cause" which suggests ethical behavior that is not done for personal gain.

65. Hawthorne and Martin, 87-88; Migliore, 77. Migliore says *humility* during Paul's time was not seen as a virtue in the Greco-Roman world but instead as a weakness for the lowly. Hawthorne and Martin agree that humility was not a well-regarded virtue of pagans. They note that the adjective form of the word was often used to describe the self-concept of a slave – "being base, unfit, shabby, mean, of no account."



together in a mutually enriching society.”<sup>66</sup> Paul, who will later declare that he has lived a “blameless” life “under the law” (3.6), does not give the Philippians a list of laws to follow. As he encourages them to live together as a community formed in Christ, his focus here on unity through humility sets the stage for him to discuss Christ as “the supreme paradigm of the new life in Christ.”<sup>67</sup>

#### Christ Reveals What It Means to Live According to the Gospel, (2.5-11)

Scholars generally agree that Paul’s next thoughts are an example of an early Christian hymn. Some include verse 5 (O’Brien, Migliore) in the hymn; others believe it starts with verse 6 (Hawthorne and Martin; Bartlett).<sup>68</sup> Verse 5 could be seen as the introduction to what Paul will immediately summarize about the Christ event. Yet, what appears to be the first stanza of the hymn (2.5-8), can lead to different ways of interpreting the Incarnation. On the one hand, Paul may mean as the NRSV suggests: “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.” There, Paul’s emphasis would be for his listeners to strive to imitate Jesus, seeing him as an exemplary model (an active stance). On the other hand, Paul may mean as the NRSV’s marginal notes propose: “Let the same mind be in you that you have in Christ Jesus.” In this case, he would be emphasizing something they already have (a passive stance). According to David

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66. Hawthorne and Martin, 88; O’Brien, 165-170. Although O’Brien agrees with the need for humility, he does not see it as the primary means of unity for the Philippians. As far as he is concerned, the “supernatural, objective realities” of verse 1 (“encouragement in Christ,” “consolation from love,” “sharing in the Spirit,” “compassion and sympathy”) form the basis of their solidarity. He sees the use of the word *humility* as preparation for the Christological hymn (2.5-11) that will follow.

67. Migliore, 78.

68. O’Brien, 202; Hawthorne and Martin, 99-100; Bartlett, 115; Morna D. Hooker, “Philippians 2.5-11: Exegetical Perspective” in *Feasting on the Word*, Year C, vol. 2, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 173.

Bartlett, either translation is possible, but in view of Philippians 2.1, where Paul reminds them they are “in Christ” and have “in the Spirit,” he argues in favor of “a Christian ethic of participation: ‘Be who you are.’”<sup>69</sup> That may be, but in the following section where Paul describes what the mind of Christ looks like, it appears that he is telling the Philippians *how* to be who they already are (active and passive stance together). Therefore, Migliore and Hawthorne and Martin’s conclusions seem more likely. Migliore sees no reason to separate the ethical (“Let the same mind be in you”) from the soteriological (“Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus” of the RSV). He says, “The soteriological reading implies the ethical, and the ethical reading presupposes the soteriological.”<sup>70</sup> Likewise, Hawthorne and Martin say, “Paul’s ethics are always *theological* ethics; i.e., the call is to act because God in Christ has acted in the first place....Paul’s objective is...to reinforce instruction (parenesis) in Christian living. And he does this by appealing to the *event* of Christ.”<sup>71</sup> It looks as if Paul presents one of the Church’s liturgical elements to remind the Philippians doctrinally of their new identity. Because of the Christ event, they have already been enabled to have the mind of Christ, to think as Christ does.

The next lines of the hymn (2.6-8) show the mind of Christ leading him to practice humility to the utmost. Christ refused to take advantage of his eternal divine position. Paul wants the Philippians to recognize that Christ gave up a great deal by becoming incarnate for the sake of the community of which they are now a part. Instead,

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69. Bartlett, 113.

70. Migliore, 81.

71. Hawthorne and Martin, 106, authors’ italics.

he “emptied” (κενόω) himself (2.6 – “though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited”) and came to earth in human form (2.7 – “taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness”). The verb, κενόω, can be defined simply – “of divestiture of position or prestige” – but hold various connotations.<sup>72</sup> The main thing to note is that the Incarnation was part of the divine plan. Yet, Migliore believes it is crucial to see that the importance of the Incarnation does not rest solely on Jesus’ birth. It “refers not simply to the moment of his birth or his death but to the whole course of his life that culminated in his crucifixion and resurrection in fulfillment of the eternal purpose of God....[I]n all that Christ said and did...he was pouring out his love, giving of himself, and freely obeying the will of God for our salvation.”<sup>73</sup>

Whereas the first stanza points to Christ’s eternal existence before creation (2.6 – “Who being in the form of God”),<sup>74</sup> the second stanza (2.9-11) emphasizes his exaltation after his crucifixion (2.9 – “God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name.”). It points to a time when all in creation (2.10 – “every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth”) will recognize his lordship (2.11 –

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72. Danker, 539. Migliore, 82, 86-90; Hooker, 173; Hawthorne and Martin, 121. Migliore gives a brief summary of the various views on the *kenosis* of Christ. He reasons that this emptying did not result in an ontological change that diminished Christ’s divinity. Hooker also notes the eternal nature of Christ and believes Paul may have been drawing a contrast between Adam and Christ. She says, “Adam had grasped at equality with God (Genesis 3.5), but Christ ‘did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited...[although] ‘equality with God’ was his by right....Adam was created in the likeness of God, and now Christ is born in the likeness of Adam.” Hawthorne and Martin insist that Christ did not give up any of his divine attributes but instead actually took on more – “the form of a slave.” To isolate any part of Christ’s being in an attempt to explain the Incarnation to them is not only beyond this Philippian text but actually disregards the fact that the hymn, like any poem, should be taken as a whole. Ultimately, they say it is impossible to explain the mystery of the divine and human in Christ. They finally conclude, “Nevertheless, the Philippian hymn seems clearly to set forth just such a paradox and affirm it, but does not try to explain it.”

73. Migliore, 82-83.

74. The Greek manuscript has the verb, ὑπάρχων, which is the present participle of the verb “to be” and does not contain the word “though” found in the NRSV.

“every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”). Hawthorne and Martin observe that it was only after Christ obeyed God and went to his death “that he was elevated to lordship over the cosmos.”<sup>75</sup> Migliore believes how the Philippians view Christ determines the degree to which they can implement how Paul urges them to live in this letter. He says it is important for them to see the Incarnation as “the very life of God.”<sup>76</sup> He goes on to explain,

It matters how we think and speak of [Christ], whether we are prepared to confess him not simply as a good teacher and a moral exemplar but as our Lord and Savior. It matters whether we are prepared to think and speak of God in the light of the humility, self-emptying and obedience of Christ....[Paul] says, ‘Consider well, the one we confess as our Lord and Savior is the very God who for our sake humbled himself, assumed our human nature, and was obedient even to death on a cross.’<sup>77</sup>

Some scholars believe Paul adds the part about death on the cross (2.8), but Bartlett concludes whether he made the addition or not, it makes no difference. He concludes that in the end, Paul “says what [he] wants to say.”<sup>78</sup> He wants the Philippians to keep what God has done in Christ and what Christ has done while on the earth at the forefront of their minds to guide their own virtuous practices.

A couple of important considerations must be made so that the Philippian, or any other Christian community, keep Paul’s basic theology about the Christ event intact. First of all, only Christ is Lord (1 Corinthians 8.6).<sup>79</sup> The “incarnation and exaltation are seen

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75. Hawthorne and Martin, 121.

76. Migliore, 89-90.

77. Migliore, 90.

78. Bartlett, 113; Migliore, 80.

79. “Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and *one Lord, Jesus Christ*, through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (italics mine).

as *unique* events in God's scheme of salvation."<sup>80</sup> Thus, Christ's self-emptying act in itself cannot be duplicated. His actions resulted in human redemption; human actions will not.<sup>81</sup> Human practices of kenosis and humility make for harmonious communal living but will not provide salvation (c.f., Ephesians 2.8-9; Romans 3.28, 4.2-8; Galatians 2.16; 2 Timothy 1.8-10). Second, human obedience or kenotic living does not always lead to human exaltation.<sup>82</sup> Of note is the fact that Paul, who is imprisoned, is writing to Christians who are currently experiencing suffering – a “divided, persecuted, and harassed community.”<sup>83</sup> Suffering is a human reality.

Although these verses are not typical for theodicy discussions, they reveal something about the nature of God and of Christ in a world where suffering and evil do exist. Migliore sums up the two verses of the hymn by pointing out,

We are not to think of the two stanzas as describing a relationship between Christ and God the Father that has the form of a transaction such as, ‘I will give you something if you give me something in return.’... There is indeed an act of giving, both on the part of Christ and on the part of God the Father. It is not obligation or duty or reward that moves the giving on either side. On both sides, the giving is free and uncoerced. Just as the obedience of Christ to the Father, even to death on a cross, is completely free and in no way motivated by obligation, duty, or fear, so the gift from the Father to Christ of the name that is above every name is completely free and in no way mandated, extorted, or coerced.... What it joyously affirms is that what God has done in Christ is and will be victorious over all the forces that threaten to ruin God's creation.... Just as the self-humbling, self-emptying, and obedience of the one who is equal with God is breathtaking grace, so too God's exaltation of Christ who humbled himself

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80. Hawthorne and Martin, 125, author's italics.

81. Migliore, 83.

82. Peter 5.6 does seem to suggest that there are times God will exalt a person (“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time”), but, still, there is only one Lord – Jesus Christ.

83. Hawthorne and Martin, 133.

for us is superabundant grace.<sup>84</sup>

William Greenway adds, “In the very act of creating and in relation to all creatures and creation, the Hebrew witness is to a God who is essentially kenotic. God does not exploit God’s power or embrace hierarchy or rest in privileged autonomy....The point is that being in nature God, Jesus Christ did not grasp after equality with God *because that is not God’s nature*” [author’s italics].<sup>85</sup>

The pattern is established. The fullest expression of living is kenosis, and it is undergirded by grace. Therefore, in the long run, Paul’s use of the hymn is not to give the Philippians eschatological information only. He expects them to apply it to their lives immediately – in other words, to make it their “rule of life.”<sup>86</sup> By including both Christ’s humility demonstrated in his obedience and God’s subsequent exaltation of Christ, Paul shows the interplay between human action and divine will. It is important to note that he opens the letter with a prayer that shows he does not expect the Philippians to practice virtues on their own. He says he prays for them to produce a “harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God” (1.11). Jesus is the only means for them to live worthy of the Gospel.

#### God Helps Individual Believers Live According to the Gospel, (2.12-18)

Paul starts this section by praising the Philippians for their obedience. Yet, it is unclear if he is pointing to the “living lord” (Migliore); “the demands of God as

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84. Migliore, 93-94.

85. William Greenway, “Philippians 2.1-13: Theological Perspective” in *Feasting on the Word*, Year A, vol. 4, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 112.

86. Douglas Ottati, “Philippians 2.5-11: Exegetical Perspective” in *Feasting on the Word*, Year C, vol. 2, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 174.

contained in the gospel he had preached” (Hawthorne and Martin); or “to Christ, the gospel, and the apostolic teaching” (O’Brien).<sup>87</sup> Regardless, the Philippians have been obedient in the past, and Paul is encouraging them to continue their salvation journey with two markers. The first is with “fear and trembling” (2.12). He is not speaking of cowering but of reverence for God.<sup>88</sup> O’Brien acknowledges the reverence due to God but also insists that it is in view of the final judgment. His understanding, after looking at Paul’s other uses of the phrase (“fear and trembling”), suggests the weighty responsibility the Philippians face.<sup>89</sup> They should understand that their actions have eternal consequences. The other marker is for the Philippians to know “it is God who is at work” in them, “enabling [them] to will and to work for his good pleasure” (2.13). As has been suggested previously, they are not expected to work out their salvation alone; God is working with them. Still, exactly how these two markers – their actions and their dependence on divine grace – interplay is not always easy to discern.

Migliore warns that misconceptions can arise in one of two ways. Either synergistically (the work humans do complements God’s work) or monergistically (God does it all) – neither of which is Paul’s stance he says. Migliore contends,

The God of the gospel establishes a covenantal relationship marked by the free grace and guidance of God on the one hand and the free thanks and obedience of God’s people on the other.... As the Christ hymn implies, divine grace and human freedom are not in competition. The action of God in Christ does not crush human freedom; it brings human freedom to its full and proper realization....What God freely and graciously accomplishes for humanity in

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87. Migliore, 97; Hawthorne and Martin, 139; O’Brien, 275. The Greek verb, ὑπηκούσατε, has no object to which Paul is referring.

88. Migliore, 99. The fact that τρόμου is defined as “trembling, quivering” but is usually paired with φόβου, which is defined as “reverence, respect” infers having a deep reverence for God. See Danker, 1016, 1062. See O’Brien, 283.

89. O’Brien, 283-4.

Christ is, of course, sufficient and complete.... [W]e are called to freely and gladly live out the grace of God freely and graciously given to us in Christ. This is the 'privilege' (1.29) we have been given: to bear witness to the grace of God in Jesus Christ not only in words but in lives that correspond to his.<sup>90</sup>

In the following verses (2.14-18), Paul repeats his admonition for the Philippians to practice humility in their daily encounters – “Do all things without murmuring and arguing” (2.14a) and by “holding fast to the word of life” (2.15). He hopes his ministry has been effective – “that I can boast on the day of Christ that I did not run in vain or labor in vain” (2.16). Finally, the only way the Philippians can live the life that Paul has envisioned – “blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world” (2.14b-d) – is if they “hold firmly to the gospel, which they have received and which is God’s means to bring them life and give them direction for living.... They have done the right thing in the past; they have generously shared what was theirs in the advancement of the gospel. He asks now that they continue as they began.”<sup>91</sup>

#### Wisdom: The Way to Follow Christ to Spiritual Transformation

Granted neither Paul nor the disciples at Philippi may have been able to list explicitly the components necessary for spiritual growth (Scripture, prayer, reflections) that Stephen Macchia<sup>92</sup> would centuries later, but the rudiments are in the epistle nonetheless. Indirectly, the letter itself meets the requirements for engaging with Scriptures since it has become part of the New Testament for Christians. As for the importance of prayer, Paul explicitly states that he prays for the Philippians (1.3-4) and

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90. Migliore, 102-103.

91. Hawthorne and Martin, 150.

92. Macchia, 16.



then commends (1.19) and encourages them for continuing to pray (4.6). His urging them to practice humility (1.4 and 2.3) and to “work out [their] own salvation” knowing that it is God who enables them “to will and to work” according to God’s will (2.12-13, c.f., 1.6) is to invite them to make reflections.

Undoubtedly, the foundation of their reflections should be the Christ event. It was the basis of Paul’s theology and life, and he sought the same for them. It is certainly so for modern disciples, including those imprisoned and participating in this research study. The weekly small group meetings would provide opportunities for the inmates to function as Paul envisioned for the Philippian community. They would be expected to pray, study Scriptures and share their written reflections with the group. Yet, all of those practices may not lead to spiritual transformation or to the kenotic living that Paul points to in this epistle.

According to Ken Wilber, these weekly practices amounts to what he calls *translation*. Translation practices (“myths and stories and tales and narratives and rituals and revivals”) give participants new beliefs or language to help them translate or make meaning of their reality, but it will not produce transformation he says.<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, Wilber does not diminish the importance of translation; in fact, he insists that it is necessary. He writes,

With transformation, the very process of translation itself is challenged, witnessed, undermined, and eventually dismantled. With typical *translation* [author’s italics], the self (or subject) is given a new way to think about the world (or objects); but with radical *transformation* [author’s italics], the self itself is inquired into, looked into, grabbed by its throat and literally throttled to

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93. Ken Wilber, *One Taste: Daily Reflections on Integral Spirituality* (Boston: Shambala, 2011), “February” chap., Kindle.

death.... For authentic transformation is not a matter of belief but of the [metaphoric] death of the believer.”<sup>94</sup>

Wilber’s premise seems to echo Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus in the third chapter of John. Nicodemus is struggling to understand Jesus’ ministry. Although he acknowledges Jesus as “a teacher who has come from God” (3.2), when Jesus tells him in order for him to “see the kingdom of God,” he has to be “born from above” or “born anew” (3.3), he is puzzled, wondering how that could happen naturally (3.4). Yet, what Jesus is saying is that as “a respected Jewish teacher” (3.10, NLT), Nicodemus needs a new way of thinking about God. Bourgeault notes that those on the Wisdom path eventually find themselves “alienated from the spiritual containers in which meaning has traditionally been conveyed.”<sup>95</sup> Wilber ends by saying,

At some point in the maturation process, translation itself, no matter how adequate or confident, simply ceases to console. No new beliefs, no new paradigm, no new myths, no new ideas, will staunch the encroaching anguish. Not a new belief for the self, but the transcendence of the self altogether, is the only path that avails.”<sup>96</sup>

Bourgeault agrees with Wilber. She says meditation, prayer (including centering prayer), *lectio divina*, chanting the Psalms are all practices that help on the spiritual journey. Yet, Bourgeault insists they are not the means of transformation; instead she says they are “gateways of perception – *floodgates* of perception, in fact” that allow practitioners “to see – not just deduce, but actually *see* – how tenderly all things are being

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94. Wilber, “February” chap. Wilber refers to this self as the *separate self*.

95. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing*, intro. See also Richard Rohr, *What the Mystics Know: Seven Pathways to Your Deeper Self* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2015), chap. 7, Kindle where he says, “On this path we take the risk being wrong. That’s how wisdom is gained. On the spiritual path the enemy isn’t pain; it’s fear of pain. We haven’t become wise, because we’re so afraid of pain.”

96. Wilber, “February” chap. Wilber translation practices console the false self from existential fear.

held in love.”<sup>97</sup> The main point of the disciplines, including centering prayer, is to facilitate changes in perspective, to view human reality from a different vantage point. Bourgeault concludes, “It’s remarkable how, no matter which spiritual path you pursue, the nuts and bolts of transformation wind up looking pretty much the same: surrender, detachment, compassion forgiveness. [Regardless of the path], you will still go through the same eye of the needle to get to where your true heart lies.”<sup>98</sup>

Bourgeault and a group of other Wisdom seekers stumbled onto what it means to get to the true heart in 2001. On a previously planned trip to Maine that was not executed until shortly after the devastation of the September 11 events, they spent a week chanting, meditating, conducting cosmological and spiritual practices teaching sessions, and participating in demanding physical labor. In the meantime, Bourgeault explains that they discovered what

most great spiritual traditions recognize – [that] the rhythm of *ora et labora*, as it’s known in the Benedictine tradition – ‘prayer and work’ – [is] essential to a deepening spiritual formation....[T]his rhythm greatly enhances the power to *think* [author’s italics], to understand and bend one’s being around truths not usually accessible at our ordinary level of awareness.<sup>99</sup>

In order for their minds to grasp the spiritual insight Bourgeault is alluding to, they had to work harmoniously out of the three centers of human existence. When the

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97. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing*, chap. I, author’s italics. Bourgeault insists that this way of perceiving has not been hidden in the Christian tradition. She writes, “In the Christian West they are strewn liberally throughout the entire sacred tradition: in the Bible, the liturgy, the hymnody and chants, the iconography.”

98. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing*, intro. Bourgeault is not suggesting that all spiritual traditions attribute the same importance to the elements of transformation. She says, “The *meaning* [author’s italics] accorded to this spiritual passage varies widely among the traditions....No single tradition preserves the whole of the original Wisdom cosmology. At some point early on in time the practical teachings came loose from their cosmological moorings and are now scattered about the family of world religions, clothed in a variety of different theologies and devotional practices.”

99. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing*, chap. I.

mind, heart, and body are brought into balance Bourgeault describes it as an *awakening*.<sup>100</sup> She continues,

When a person is poised in all three centers, balanced and alertly there, a shift happens in consciousness. Rather than being trapped in our usual mind, with its well-formed rut tracks of issues and agendas and ways of thinking, we seem to come from a deeper, steadier, and quieter place. We are *present*... This state of presence is extraordinarily important to know and taste in oneself. For sacred tradition is emphatic in its insistence that real Wisdom can be given and received only in a state of presence, with all three centers of our being engaged and awake. Anything less is known in the tradition as “sleep” and results in an immediate loss of receptivity to higher meaning.<sup>101</sup>

Lest it is assumed that week-long getaways of work, prayer, and study are the only ways to realize the spiritual transformation available in the Wisdom tradition, Bourgeault quickly points out otherwise. She maintains that intellectual prowess, mystical experiences, or monastic membership are not requisite.<sup>102</sup> As far as she is concerned *surrender* is. She says, “Chanting, meditation, and practical work are all activities but surrender is an underlying attitude. That means it is there in everything, at the root of everything. Without it, all the other spiritual practices remain merely pious busywork.”<sup>103</sup> That would include centering prayer, which would be a new practice for the experimental group. Bourgeault says it is “a method based entirely on patterning into the subconscious

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100. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing*, chap. I.

101. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing*, chap. III.

102. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing*, chap. I. Bourgeault says those unfamiliar with the Wisdom path often confuse it with mysticism. She describes *mysticism* as “spontaneous, ecstatic, and ineffable.”

103. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing*, chap. VIII.

the gesture of surrender, which is the most direct and powerful way to awaken the heart.”<sup>104</sup>

Although this study is designed to compare how well the experimental and control groups are able to implement the rule of life, with the expectation that the experimental group may be able to do so more readily, both will have had opportunities to experience spiritual growth. They all have time to pray, reflect, and engage with the Scriptures. In addition to having personal time, they also have opportunities to participate in biblical study groups and hearing the Gospel preached in weekly worship services by volunteer ministers. Participation in either group will not limit God’s work in their lives. Both groups can tie their devotional and ethical lives together and experience the living Christ in a new way. Regardless of the actual outcome, this study’s underlying goal is for the participants to become better disciples of Christ – loving God and loving others. If they learn how to practice their new lives in Christ now, perhaps they can learn what it takes to stay out of prison in the future.

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104. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing*, chap. VIII.

## CHAPTER THREE

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Busy-ness or preoccupation can make us miss some of life's most profound lessons. It can happen to inmates, too, who may look as if they are neither busy nor have the same distractions and requirements of those who live outside of prison. Yet, they are as susceptible as anyone else. In fact, their high recidivism rates publicly reveal their failures to learn from previous life experiences. However, in following Stephen Macchia's recommendation to craft a rule of life, inmates and others can realize an underlying but also apparently ubiquitous lesson: *Human beings are created with an inherent propensity for fruitfulness*. A reflective glance in nature presents ample evidence of creation's intrinsic growth potential. However, busy-ness often keeps us from learning one of the major lessons of the fields. For example, fields that have been cleared or that only have a light covering of grasses will turn into forests if left on their own. Problems certainly arise if what grows is not desired, in quality or quantity. Macchia uses a field metaphor – grape vines, in particular – to warn that wild plants *will* produce fruit. However, he goes on to explain that crafting a rule of life allows us to strategically farm major areas of our lives to prevent unwanted harvests. He says,

Those who are intentionally reflective, prayerful and attentively responsive are like cultivated vines. Growing on a trellis (a rule of life) and cultivated toward maturity, they become spiritually formed. The trellis curbs our tendency to wander and supports our rather frail attempts to be nurtured spiritually. Our lives will produce an abundance of fruit for the glory of God. Mature vines are cultivated to produce the best fruit.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Stephen A. Macchia, *Crafting a Rule of Life: An Invitation to the Well-Ordered Way* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 15.

Although Macchia currently offers the structure for providing conditions for optimal spiritual growth, he learned about the process from St. Benedict, the sixth-century monastic founder and leader. Benedict wrote his rule for himself and for the other monks in his community. He starts with, “Listen carefully, my son, to the master’s instructions and attend to them with the ear of your heart.”<sup>2</sup> Likewise, Macchia also grounds his program in the importance of listening in a “safe, faith-filled community environment. Here God’s voice can be heard by those seeking him through humility and obedience. In community, like-minded and like-hearted believers best learn to practice the disciplines of prayer, healthy relationships, and good works.”<sup>3</sup> Like Macchia and Benedict, inmates can develop a new rule of life. That is, they can reflect on and discuss the lessons in Macchia’s program to live differently from the rule they lived previously that landed them in prison, or differently from the one they currently live in prison in order to see new fruits develop. In the meantime, they can become better disciples – serving God and others in new ways.

#### St. Benedict’s Community

The virtues Macchia mentions above – humility and obedience – were also hallmarks of Benedict’s community. Though it could easily be assumed that his original audience of monks would have already developed those virtues, he knew they had not. He wrote his rule for four different groups of monks but believed it would only be applicable to one. Of the first three groups, Benedict was convinced that two of them would not abide by the rule and one would not need it. They were: (1) the *sarabaites*

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2. Saint Benedict, *The rule of St. Benedict in English*, ed. Timothy Fry (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1982), 15.

3. Macchia, 15.

(“the most detestable kind of monk”) – those who refused to follow any rule and were “still loyal to the world” (1.6); (2) the *gyrovagues* (“worse than the sarabaites”) – those who refused to settle in one monastery, preferring to move every three to four days (1.10-11); and (3) the *anchorites* or *hermits* – those for whom the rule would be unnecessary since they had already “built up their strength” and were “trained to fight against the devil” (1.3-5).<sup>4</sup> His goal was to establish order in the community so that the monks could, as he saw it, return “back to him” [Christ] from whom he considered they had drifted (Prologue, 2).<sup>5</sup> It was only the fourth group that Benedict believed would follow his rule, the *cenobites* – those willing to “serve under a rule and an abbot” (1.1).<sup>6</sup> As far as he was concerned, obedience only started when the monks were “ready to give up [their] own will” (Prologue, 3).<sup>7</sup> Submission to human and divine authority was the necessary precursor to the development of humility. Benedict explained, “The first step of humility is unhesitating obedience which comes naturally to those who cherish Christ above all,” (5.1-2).<sup>8</sup> Moreover, he insisted it must be practiced without “any reaction of unwillingness” or “grumbling in [the] heart” (5.14, 18).<sup>9</sup>

Benedict was not a romantic. He taught that a lack of humility was no reason to avoid pursuing or practicing the rule. He asserted, “What is not possible to us by nature,

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4. Benedict, 20-21.

5. Benedict, 15.

6. Benedict, 20.

7. Benedict, 15.

8. Benedict, 29.

9. Benedict, 30-31.



let us ask the Lord to supply by the help of his grace” (Prologue, 41).<sup>10</sup> Benedict believed the monks could initiate movements themselves on what he called the ladder of humility.

He said,

We descend by exaltation and ascend by humility. Now the ladder erected is our life on earth, and if we humble our hearts the Lord will raise it to heaven. We may call our body and soul the sides of this ladder, into which our divine vocation has fitted the various steps of humility and discipline as we ascend (7.5-9).<sup>11</sup>

He went on to say what movement from one level to the next would entail in twelve steps. He described the first rung of the ladder as having a fear of God and continued with such things as embracing suffering, confessing sins, and practicing silence until eventually “a monk [would] always manifest humility in his bearing no less than in his heart” and so it would be evident everywhere he goes (7.1-64).<sup>12</sup> Finally, Benedict concluded,

Now, therefore, after ascending all these steps of humility, the monk will quickly arrive at that perfect love of God which casts out fear. Through this love, all that he once performed with dread, he will now begin to observe without effort, as though naturally, from habit, no longer out of fear of hell, but out of love for Christ, good habit and delight in virtue. All this the Lord will by the Holy Spirit graciously manifest in his workman now cleansed of vices and sins (7.67-70).<sup>13</sup>

Benedict’s goals for his monks in the sixth continue to encourage others today.

Macchia says, “I’ve long been inspired by the story of St. Benedict, a man who left a life of privilege in order to study theology in the city of Rome. But, in response to the reckless ways of his peers, he left his academic environment ... [and] lived in a cave for the next three years. His one desire: listen to God, and then respond in obedience to the

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10. Benedict, 18.

11. Benedict, 32.

12. Benedict, 32-38.

13. Benedict, 38.

call of God on his life.”<sup>14</sup> (Stephen Macchia, February 8, 2017, e-mail message to author). The inspiration Macchia received from Benedict and the reason Benedict fled to the cave in the first place end up being the same. They both wanted to find out how to live faithfully as Christians despite how others around them lived. The prison setting does not preclude inmates setting the same intention. The Prison Phoenix Trust group, which works in the United Kingdom’s prisons reports that one of the inmates there concludes, “All beings, no matter how reactionary, fearful, dangerous or lost, can open themselves to the sacred within and become free. I have become free even in prison. Prison is the perfect monastery.”<sup>15</sup> The same conclusion can be reached by American inmates today.

#### Plans to Discuss This Project

What Benedict and Macchia both point to is regardless of context, Christians are called to live humbly in obedience to the demands of the Gospel. As Christians have had to develop counter-cultural approaches to some aspects of their lives since Christianity’s inception, so, too, would those in the modern world – whether in prison or not. The Gospel cannot be considered an agent of change if it is primarily viewed as *good information*. It requires personal and divine interaction in practicing its demands. To that end, patience and trust in Macchia’s program will be required as the inmates develop the rhythm of reading, discussing, listening, and recording their reflections. Notably, their whole plan for developing a rule of life can be compromised if they fail to write down

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14. Stephen Macchia, February 8, 2017, e-mail message to author.

15. Elaine Macinnes, “Light Behind Bars,” <http://archive.thetablet.co.uk/article/17th-august-1996/7/light-behind-bars> (accessed July 7, 2014).

their goals for this study and talk about them.<sup>16</sup> If the program is not important as demonstrated by their active participation, chances are lessened that they will see changes in their lives. The scaffolding provided by Macchia's curriculum can offer the assistance that has eluded them thus far. Thomas Keating cautions, "Beginners on the journey need concrete instruction as regards the regular practice of prayer, a simple rule of life, and suggested readings."<sup>17</sup> The practices of their rule of life will help establish changes in the inmates' brains. Andrew Newberg and Mark Waldman have found that a kind of hinge activity occurs in that increased activity in one part of the brain can decrease activity in another part. For instance, as anger or anxiety rises, cognitive skills, empathy, and intuition decline.<sup>18</sup> The angry atmosphere of the prison is a prime, albeit challenging place for inmates to develop practices to counteract the negative influences they live with daily.

Developing a rule of life is also a way to apply the requirements of the two greatest commandments for Christians – to love God and to love people, including oneself (Matthew 22.38-39; Mark 12.29-31; Luke 10.27-28). Macchia explains that in the process of developing the rule, "God becomes the primary informant of the heart and mind," and in the meantime "loving worship and faith-filled service to God produces

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16. Andrew Newberg, M.D. and Mark Robert Waldman, *How God Changes Your Brain: Breakthrough Findings from a Leading Neuroscientist* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2009), chap. 9, Kindle. Newberg and Waldman also say, "When you clearly articulate your intention or goal in writing and speech, your frontal lobes can more efficiently direct your motor cortex to carry out your desire as you actively engage with others in the world," says Newberg and Waldman.

17. Thomas Keating, *Intimacy with God: An Introduction to Centering Prayer* (Snowmass, Colorado: Crossroad Publishing, 2012), 90.

18. Newberg and Waldman, chap. 6.

pure joy.”<sup>19</sup> Whether the inmates were Christians at the start of their incarceration or became Christians afterward, it is not unreasonable to expect them to grow spiritually – to grow in their love for God, others, and themselves. Macchia’s systematic approach of reflecting on all aspects of daily life in the context of a small group setting and using the Bible as the foundational text, along with hagiographical references, is one way of starting the journey to a more fruitful life – a mature life that is rooted in God and that can eventually provide nourishment for others. Therefore, this paper will discuss how Macchia’s rule of life can facilitate growth for both the control and the experimental group of this study.

A rule of life is a holistic description ...<sup>20</sup>

*You might have heard the old saying, ‘Give someone a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach someone to fish, and you feed him for the rest of his life.’ The same holds true for life itself. If you give someone an answer, a rule, a principle, you help him solve one problem. But if you teach him to walk with God, well then, you’ve helped him solve the rest of his life. You’ve helped him tap into an inexhaustible source of guidance, comfort, and protection.*<sup>21</sup>

Macchia’s comprehensive program provides the structure for inmates to learn to walk with God in all the major areas of their lives. They will not be given a rule to live by but will develop a rule of life as part of their journey with God. They will start by first identifying important relationships (chapter 1) and then setting priorities for relating to the significant people in their lives (chapter 7). After they identify their gifts and talents (chapter 2) and set goals (chapter 3), including long-term ones (chapter 4), they will

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19. Macchia, 15.

20. “Your personal rule of life is a holistic description of the Spirit-empowered rhythms and relationships that create, redeem, sustain and transform the life God invites you to humbly fulfill for Christ’s glory” (Macchia, 15).

21. John Eldredge, *Walking with God: Talk to him. Hear him. Really.* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), intro., Kindle.

develop a personal mission statement (chapter 5). Then, they will consider ways to implement their mission to serve others (chapter 10), Christ (chapter 11), and their current community (chapter 12). Yet, none of their plans will lead to significant changes if they do not also consider their daily habits (chapter 8), including how they spend their time (chapter 6). Finally, despite having limited, if any, financial resources, they will, nonetheless, plan ways to be good stewards of material possessions (chapter 9) and thus be prepared if their financial situation changes. Although Macchia's holistic plan requires much individual reflection, he does not intend it to be a solo experience.

...of the Spirit-empowered rhythms and relationships that create, redeem, sustain, and transform...

Macchia insists that the rule of life must be "God-empowered."<sup>22</sup> This suggests that inmates will have to have faith that God will make his power and presence known to them in ways they can grasp as they write their own rule. One of the main things they must grasp is that living the Christian life to the fullest extent *does* require divine assistance. Without that understanding, they may try, as do many other Christians, to implement their rule of life by relying on their own knowledge and strength. Limited perception of the demands and the power of the Gospel will eventually truncate their path to maturity. Richard Hauser, a Jesuit monk, explains,

Christ's goals for us *are* [author's italics] overwhelming. Christ asks us to love and serve God and our neighbor with our entire heart, soul, mind and body. And indeed these goals are overwhelming and unreachable – without the Holy Spirit! ...The Holy Spirit is the animating force both of the community's life together and of the life of each individual member of the community.<sup>23</sup>

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22. Macchia, 16.

23. Richard J. Hauser, *Moving in the Spirit: Becoming a Contemplative in Action* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1986), 4, 6.

The Holy Spirit's presence and activity in the small group setting of the prison are the primary means of cohesion for the group and will help set the stage for individual transformation. As the inmates develop new relationships with each other and practice the divinely inspired rhythms of prayer, Scripture readings, reflections, and discussions, they will be creating markers which can point to their spiritual growth. For example, they will have the opportunity to form and notice that they have become friends with each other through the weekly meetings. They may also notice that they have developed a deeper relationship with God through their prayers and reflections. Keating explains,

The Christian spiritual path is based on a deepening trust in God....The spiritual journey has great difficulty in getting off to a good start if we are carrying a load of unexamined and unquestioned negative attitudes toward God....The spiritual journey is a course in growing up and becoming liberated from childhood fixations at emotional levels that have become disruptive of our adult life and that interfere with our relationships.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, relationships are a hallmark of the Christian spiritual path – for the individual and for the group. “Each one of us bears in a special way a particular name of God, a particular color of the rainbow that is our own innermost nature but seeks its fulfillment through participation in the whole.”<sup>25</sup> Of course, what sets Christian relationships apart from other social groupings is having a relationship with God. Ruth Haley Barton says, “The capacity to discern and do the will of God arises out of friendship with God, cultivated through prayer, times of quiet listening and alert awareness.”<sup>26</sup> Certainly, friendship with God can and should lead to better friendships with others, but underlying

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24. Keating, *Intimacy with God*, 1, 13.

25. Cynthia Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing: Reclaiming an Ancient Tradition to Awaken the Heart* ((San Francisco: Jossey-Bass), chap. V, Kindle.

26. Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2006), chap. 7, Kindle.

Barton's simple summary is an important fact. It takes time for believers to be able to discern God's voice. Nevertheless, weeks of sanctifying time to work through Macchia's program can be the means of grace for study participants to grow in their relationships with members of the group and with God.

Macchia expects the Holy Spirit to "create, redeem, sustain, and transform" the lives of the participants as they develop and implement their rule of life. The regular meetings will give the inmates opportunities to notice and discuss ways the Holy Spirit is producing fruit in theirs and in each other's lives. Keating points out, "The practice of virtue is the traditional term for erasing the old programs and writing new programs based on the values of the Gospel."<sup>27</sup> As the inmates put into practice the tenets of this new program, they will also have time to explore what it means to be part of a redemptive community. Barton reports how she came to realize the benefits of being redeemed. She explains, "God has chosen in these days to dwell permanently in the bodies of redeemed persons and in the body of Christ as it gathers. I had to grapple in very practical ways with the truth that in some unexplainable way God inhabits our bodies, making them a place where we can meet and know him."<sup>28</sup> Macchia's program presents the practicality involved in being part of a community that demonstrates love for God and others.

Living according to a rule of life will take commitment. Keating comments on the interplay between human participation and God's grace. He says, "Grace is the presence and action of Christ at every moment of our lives...Human effort depends on grace even

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27. Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, (New York: Continuum, 1992), 16.

28. Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*, chap. 5.

as it invites it.”<sup>29</sup> Hauser concurs. He notes, “The [Holy] Spirit initiates all movement toward good within us.... [W]e can call all promptings toward good actions flowing from this indwelling by the traditional term of actual grace.”<sup>30</sup> Ultimately, Macchia’s plan is a way for the inmates to recognize the grace of God working through the Holy Spirit in their lives to make them more like Christ.<sup>31</sup> Yet, personally interpreting the actions of the Holy Spirit can be different for each of them, depending on where they are in their spiritual journey.

### The Spiritual Journey

Although there is a general consensus that various stages exist on the spiritual journey, there is no universally accepted description. For example, Phileena Heuertz suggests seven: awakening, longing, darkness, death, transformation, intimacy, and union.<sup>32</sup> Based on reflections of Genesis 1.27, in the movement from the *image* to the *likeness* of God, John Chirban observes five major stages in his studies of Greek orthodox spirituality: image, metanoia (conversion), apatheia (participation or transformation), light (illumination), and theosis (union).<sup>33</sup> St. Teresa of Avila presents seven that she argues through the practice of prayer.<sup>34</sup> Though Teresa does not classify

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29. Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, 128, 132.

30. Hauser, 26.

31. Macchia, 16.

32. Phileena Heuertz, *Pilgrimage of a Soul: Contemplative Spirituality for the Active Life* (Downers Grove, Illinois: nterVarsity Press, 2010), intro., Kindle.

33. John T. Chirban, “Developmental Stages in Eastern Orthodox Christianity,” in *Transformations of Consciousness: Conventional and Contemplative Perspectives on Development*, Ken Wilber, Jack Engler and Daniel P. Brown (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1986), 285-314.

34. See St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle*, translated by E. Allison Peers (Radford, Virginia: Wilder Publications, 2008), Kindle edition for a full discussion.



them as such, Dennis Billy says her stages can be imposed in classical categories: *purgative* (vocal, mental, affective, acquired recollection); *illuminative* (infused contemplation, prayer of quiet); and *unitive* (prayers of union – spiritual betrothal, spiritual marriage).<sup>35</sup> Richard Hauser and Evelyn Underhill add *awakening* to the beginning of the classical categorizations.<sup>36</sup>

All of the above authors agree that movement from one category to another is not always sequential. Heuertz advises picturing the categories as “three-dimensional rings all interlocked” and says,

Each ring represents a movement or season in the soul’s development. During a process of formation, the soul moves throughout these rings at various times, in no particular order. The spiritual journey is more cyclical than linear. Each moment in a certain movement or ring provides a necessary experience for personal and spiritual growth and development. At times we may progress from one ring to another, only to find ourselves revisiting a former ring for a deeper work in our ever-growing soul.... [I]t is a story of ongoing transformation in the image of Christ.<sup>37</sup>

Heuertz continues, “Transformation, which essentially involves healing, is a slow process. It is rarely full and complete in an instant. It takes time. And during that time, it demands cycles of awakening, longing, [and] darkness.”<sup>38</sup> Thomas Keating also mentions the doubling back movements but likens them to archaeological digs in which the Holy Spirit works in believers’ lives oftentimes chronologically and based on where healing is needed the most. Thus, in the beginning stage, the “most destructive aspects of our

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35. Dennis J. Billy, “Introduction,” *Interior Castle*, Teresa of Avila (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2007), intro., Kindle. Teresa’s delineations are noted in the paragraphs.

36. Hauser, 13; Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 124-125, Kindle edition for the basic list.

37. Heuertz, intro.

38. Heuertz, chap. 5.

present relationships and addictive behaviors” are healed, and “a personal relationship with Christ forms.”<sup>39</sup> The spiritual journey is expected to be dynamic and designed to continue throughout life. Keating continues, “Essential to Christianity is growth in relationship with Christ - a relationship that is constantly deepening and addressing itself to every level of our being. Not just our body, mind or imagination, not just our heart, but our inmost being.”<sup>40</sup> Even though Keating insists that all aspects of self-hood should be open to the Divine, he has observed that it does not happen all at once either. He explains that there are moments where various healings take place and where the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5.22-23) are developed and experienced. Then, he says plateaus or moments of relative quiet and rest are experienced before the Holy Spirit begins another archeological dig, and the cycle continues.<sup>41</sup>

Cynthia Bourgeault echoes Keating and Macchia in noting the significance of viewing the personal relationship with Christ holistically in her discussions on spiritual growth. She says “the heart and mind and body” must be brought “into balance, to awaken” and facilitate what she calls “unitive seeing.”<sup>42</sup> She presents a paradigm of the continual sharpening of spiritual perception until not only is there intra-personal union, but also increasing union with the Divine. Bourgeault explains,

There is a vision large enough to contain not only our minds but also our hearts

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39. Thomas Keating, *Intimacy with God: An Introduction to Centering Prayer* (Snowmass, Colorado: Crossroad Publishing, 2012), 53, 56.

40. Keating, *Intimacy with God*, 110.

41. Keating, *Intimacy with God*, 56. Galatians 5.22-23: “By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.”

42. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing*, chap. I.

and souls; an understanding of our place in the divine cosmology.... Heart-knowing always involves bringing one's whole being into alignment with what is known in an intimate yielding of oneself into the divine intelligence.<sup>43</sup>

In the end, what she and other Christian teachers have espoused through the years is that the ultimate goal of the spiritual journey is union with God. Hauser presents a chart that captures the classic discussion in the simplest form:

<u>Stage</u>	<u>Focus of Daily Living</u>
Unawakened Self	Law and Commandments  (Relationship to Christ by fidelity to obligations (i.e., church, etc.)

#### AWAKENING OF THE SELF TO THE SPIRIT

(Relationship to Christ by fidelity to the Spirit)

Purgative Way	Imitation of Christ: Patterns of action  Continuing Conversion: Temptations  Fluctuations of heart and action
Illuminative Way	Imitation of Christ: Quality of heart  Continuing Conversion: Temptations  Fluctuation of heart; no fluctuation of action
Unitive Way	Imitation of Christ: Zeal for service  Continuing Conversion: Temptations  No fluctuation of heart, nor of action <sup>44</sup>

Jordan Aumann clarifies this classical categorization of the spiritual journey by saying,

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43. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing*, 213, chap. VII.

44. Hauser, 13. See 12-21 for fuller discussion which includes corresponding categories for prayer (vocal, meditation, beginning contemplation, and advanced contemplation).

The three stages (purgation, illumination, union) or degrees of charity are nothing more than divisions that characterize in a general way the infinite variety of aspects in the Christian life. The path of the supernatural life is a winding path, and its stages offer a variety of transitions and levels that will differ with each individual. We must never think that the three basic stages are self-contained compartments, and that those who are at a given time in one stage will never participate in the activities of another stage. A soul in the purgative stage may experience the graces of the illuminative stage....Likewise, advanced souls may sometimes find it necessary to return to the exercises and practices proper to a lower stage through which they have already passed. The Spirit breathes where he will and therefore one should avoid rigid classification.<sup>45</sup>

### *Unawakened/Awakened*

Accordingly, it is possible that some inmates in either the experimental or control group may be in an unawakened state although they self-identify as Christians. Their attempts to follow the commandments and rules of the Christian faith may be externally instead of internally motivated. Even so, Hauser, in accordance with his Catholic faith, believes external motivations of themselves can indirectly lead to internal change. He notes that as spiritual goals are considered, the external practices can gradually give way to internal inspirations in response to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.<sup>46</sup> However, in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Calvin presents a traditional Protestant summary of the movement from the unawakened to the awakened stage. He believes there is a “natural instinct, and awareness of divinity” and “a certain understanding of [God’s] divine majesty” in each individual (*Book One*, III.1)<sup>47</sup> but insists that with the Fall, the knowledge of God has been “so corrupted that by itself it produces only the worst fruits” (*Book One*, IV.4; see also *Book Two*, I.7). That is, human beings, before the awakened

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45. Jordan Aumann, *Spiritual Theology* (London: Continuum, 2006), 116.

46. Hauser, 7.

47. All parenthetical references are taken from John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006).

state, are “held captive by the yoke of sin” and can of their “own nature neither aspire to good through resolve nor struggle after it through effort.” (*Book Two*, IV.1). Yet, it is God, who through grace (*Book Two*, III.14; IV.8), “direct[s] our faith to him” or “draws [human beings] to contemplate him” (*Book One*, V.6). John Chirban notes that Orthodox Christians believe there is an image of God, “an innate, natural quality” which “yearns to become God-like” in each individual.<sup>48</sup> He describes the discernment of the Holy Spirit’s presence as a *knowing*, but also points out the human participation element:

The thrust of the Orthodox approach to knowing (since understanding God’s essence is impossible) is not by way of concept or formula but through union which transcends human intellectual category and expression. By underscoring the necessity of life in a ‘holistic’ (body, mind soul) harmony with Christ’s transfiguring Message, one sets upon an eternally continuous path of knowing....Orthodox epistemology is diametrically opposed to both idealism and empiricism – because they suffer the limitations of locking one into the realms of ideas or matter, respectively....This approach to knowing explains why Orthodoxy cannot limit itself to scholarly research and writing alone, but *requires* [author’s italics] the experience of faith in life, i.e., a place for solitude, prayer, quiet.<sup>49</sup>

Bourgeault also sees awakening as a participatory process. She describes it as “the capacity to perceive and act in accordance with the higher laws of the Kingdom of heaven.”<sup>50</sup> The perception of the demands of the Kingdom of heaven and corresponding actions must be mutually inclusive for those continuing the Christian journey. As Hauser

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48. John T. Chirban, “Developmental Stages in Eastern Orthodox Christianity,” in *Transformations of Consciousness: Conventional and Contemplative Perspectives on Development*, Ken Wilber, Jack Engler and Daniel P. Brown (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1986), 286.

49. Chirban, 292. Chirban’s observations undergird the notion that all facets of human being existence were affected by the Fall – including knowing. He found that the believers he studied did not dismiss the knowings of the mind entirely. Instead, they insisted that spiritual knowing (being in communion with God) is higher than natural knowing, and the human mind is naturally capable of knowing God, in a sense, if individuals wish (See 292-296).

50. Cynthia Bourgeault, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening* (Lanham, Maryland: Cowley Publications, 2004), chap. 8, Kindle.

pointedly says, “This awakening to the Spirit within ourselves as our primary guide in following Jesus is the key to all growth in Christian life....Only after we have experienced this awakening can we be truly said to be on the Christian spiritual path.”<sup>51</sup> At any rate, imitating Jesus’ practices of obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit will be necessary for the inmates to move from their unawakened state or to grow spiritually if they have already been awakened. However, participation in the study does not guarantee either.

Some inmates may not continue with the study. One of the main reasons is that the journey is challenging. In drawing conclusions from her own journey, Heuertz observes, “Awakening is difficult and life altering....The spiritual journey is an intense sojourn...In taking the initial steps to wake up, I began to listen to the voices in my head and the pain in my heart that I had long avoided.”<sup>52</sup> The time allotted for the study may not be sufficient for the inmates to make the crucial decision to continue; they may opt to avoid painful issues they had previously buried. Furthermore, many of them convince themselves that since prison is a tough environment, it is best for them to close their hearts to everyone. That may include God also – on a subconscious, if not conscious level. Yet, in describing what she calls the Mystic Way, Underhill asserts, “It draws [the] whole being homeward, but always under the guidance of the heart.”<sup>53</sup> Chirban summarizes the interior tension of those who do remain on the path:

The nature of the human person in the Christian tradition emphasizes that there is a godliness in the human being – ‘the image’ – and a potential for growth to self-

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51. Hauser, 12-13.

52. Heuertz, chap. 1, con.

53. Underhill, 59.

perfection – ‘the likeness’. Often, however, religious literature speaks of the goal, perfection, in a vacuum, in the sense that one is left with the impression that there are missing links or there is a lack of clarity concerning the process between the present and future (perfected) states....[However,] the autobiographies of saints or their other writings reveal their human struggles and document the valuable processes for change that biographies often mistakenly omit....The dynamic between individual struggle and spiritual forces is a very essential point....The saints are not static and perfect, but they work to develop themselves and ultimately they grow.<sup>54</sup>

Indeed, it *is* a work that the inmates will have to participate in to facilitate their spiritual growth. Underhill rightly describes this first stage as “*the New Birth*, the awakening of the deeper self,” in which the soul is alerted “to a new and more real work which it must do.”<sup>55</sup>

### *Purgative*

Those who may be in the awakened stage already may also experience some elements of the purgative stage. Hauser sums up movement from awakening to purgation well:

Awakening to the Spirit within ourselves as our primary guide in following Jesus is the key to all growth in Christian life. But before we reach this stage of imitating Christ, we all pass through the stage of following as faithfully as we can the teachings and the laws given us by Jesus and presented to us by our Church. Indeed our desire to observe these laws flows from the Holy Spirit within us. However, as we grow in openness to the Lord, we find that the observance of these external criteria for following Christ is not sufficient. The focus of our morality is internalized and the action of the Spirit is intensified. Gradually we attempt to bring every area of our daily life under the influence of this law of the Spirit. Though our external actions may appear the same to observers, the internal motivation has radically changed; we are attempting to live our life in response to an internal movement and not simply in conformity with an external directive give to us.<sup>56</sup>

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54. Chirban, 290-291.

55. Underhill, 224, 146.

56. Hauser, 13.

The structure of Macchia's program primes the desires of believers in the purgative stage. They will have many external promptings to consider as the program progresses. In the meantime, they may mistakenly assume that the reason they have felt restless or that their spiritual life seems to be at a standstill is because they need to do more – more praying, fasting, serving, etc. Little may they know that although the rule of life may give them some momentary relief in reflecting on and desiring to increase their current practices, ultimately, they will have to reassess their spiritual disciplines throughout life. If they currently feel restless, their spiritual practices or lack thereof may not be the cause.

Underhill explains,

The Self, aware for the first time of Divine Beauty, realizes by contrast its own finiteness and imperfection, the manifold illusions in which it is immersed, the immense distance which separates it from the One. Its attempts to eliminate by discipline and mortification all that stands in the way of its progress towards union with God constitute purgation: a state of pain and effort.<sup>57</sup>

Yet, they will not have to face the challenges of this stage without divine assistance.

Keating counsels:

Our agreement with the divine therapist is to allow the Holy Spirit to bring us to the truth about ourselves. This initial period of conversion corresponds to the springtime of the spiritual life, when prayer is easy, and we have great energy in pursuing practices of self-denial, various forms of prayer, ministry, and other forms of social service. As we begin to trust God more, we enjoy a certain freedom from our vices and may often experience great satisfaction in our spiritual endeavors. When God decides we are ready, he invites us to a new level of self-knowledge. God withdraws the initial consolations of conversion, and we are plunged in darkness, spiritual dryness, and confusion.<sup>58</sup>

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57. Underhill, 124.

58. Thomas Keating, "Contemplation and the Divine Therapy," in *The Human Condition: Contemplation and Transformation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), Kindle.



Helping the inmates see that the spiritual upheaval of this stage is normal but also crucial may, in some instances, be a challenge to keep them from becoming discouraged and quitting. The fact is although they may have previously experienced an awakening, the deeper work of the spiritual journey does not begin until they enter the purgative stage.<sup>59</sup> Thus, the awakening is, in effect, an invitation to purgation. Keating goes on to explain, “The heart of the Christian journey is God’s determined will to transmit to us the maximum of divine light, life, love and happiness that we can possibly receive.”<sup>60</sup> This suggests a progression of sorts. Keating goes on to point out that the Apostle Paul believed that transformation is a continuous process.<sup>61</sup>

At any rate, despite its challenges, the purgative stage has several benefits. First, it will help the inmates develop faith in God and not in their practices. Faith in the character of God can reduce the demands for signs of his presence in their lives.<sup>62</sup> It fosters a kind of rest instead of a striving, which can produce internal anxiety. Underhill explains that the purgative stage is a “remaking in relation to reality of the permanent elements of character. These elements, so far, have subserved the interests of the old self, worked for it in the world of sense. Now they must be adjusted to the needs of the new self and to the

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59. Hauser, 17.

60. Thomas Keating, *Manifesting God* (Canada: Lantern Books, 2005), chaps. 5, 3. Kindle. Keating also says, “[T]he ups and downs of the spiritual journey contain alternating periods of consolation and desolation...God usually sends us what we need, not what we want or think we need....That is because God is so close and knows us so intimately that he already is well aware of what we need.”

61. Keating, *Manifesting God*, chap. 6. Keating references 2 Corinthians 3.18: “And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.”

62. Keating, *Manifesting God*, chap. 6.

transcendent world in which it moves.”<sup>63</sup> Second, although it may be only seen in hindsight, purgation shows God working even when it seems like nothing is changing or when life becomes painful with no immediate relief. Keating notes, “The kingdom is at work in the ordinary circumstances of daily life and is even more active and powerful in difficult situations. Difficulties, when accepted for God’s sake, tend to accelerate the spiritual journey and to move it beyond the routines of selfishness that are so deeply rooted in us.”<sup>64</sup> Not only are root causes eradicated but the development of other attributes (i.e., patience, faith, etc.) is also beneficial for those experiencing difficulties. In addition, external difficulties can lead to a deeper knowledge of the self and more compassion for family, friends, and others.<sup>65</sup> Keating also sums up the third benefit of the purgative stage:

Our expectations of moral perfection, spiritual consolation, and experiences of ecstatic quality are gradually shredded. These benefits may be a necessary phase of the spiritual journey for beginners or for those along the way, but the heart of the journey is not rooted in such experiences. Rather, it is rooted in the transformation of our spiritual faculties, attitudes, and motivations, and the growing conviction of God’s closeness in all our activities, even the most profane and inconsequential.<sup>66</sup>

Although this recognition of the divine presence comes in the midst of or on the heels of a tumultuous period in the spiritual life of the believer, Underhill reports a fourth benefit. She says, “At last, as it seems suddenly, the moment comes: tottering is over, the muscles have learnt their lesson, they adjust themselves automatically, and the new self suddenly

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63. Underhill, 160.

64. Keating, *Manifesting God*, chap. 6.

65. Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, 97.

66. Keating, *Manifesting God*, chap. 7.

finds itself – it knows not how – standing upright and secure. That is the moment which marks the boundary between the purgative and the illuminative states.”<sup>67</sup>

### *Illuminative*

One final important consideration for this study is that some inmates may be in the illuminative stage. They may be drawn to the opportunity to craft a rule of life as a way to love God and others more. What separates them from those in the purgative stage, who also desire to do more, would be their motivation. Their desires are internally motivated and are not attempts to alleviate the spiritual pressure they may be feeling. Underhill believes this stage (“the largest and most densely populated province of the mystic kingdom” is a “state of consciousness” that is “radically different from that of [the] *normal*” [author’s italics] and differs from the “preceding adventures and experiences” of the divine.<sup>68</sup> She points out that the self-knowledge so prominent in the purgative gives way to knowledge of the Divine in the illuminative. However, Underhill importantly notes that purification can occur simultaneously along with the illuminative and some degree of purification continues throughout life.<sup>69</sup> At any rate, she goes on to explain more about the illuminative:

The mystic has not a veritable foothold in that transcendental world into which he penetrates now and again: enjoys a certain fellowship – not yet union – with the great life of the All, and thence draws strength and peace....He has now got

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67. Underhill, 170.

68. Underhill, 177, 173, 178. Underhill goes on to say of the many souls who reach this stage, “[The ] true goal lies far beyond this joyful basking in the sunbeams of the Uncreated Light. Only the greatest souls learn this lesson and tread the whole of that ‘King’s Highway’ which leads [believers] back to [their] Source.] ‘For the many that come to Bethlehem, there be few that will go on to Calvary.’ The rest stay here, in this Earthly Paradise, these flowery fields; where the liberated self wanders at will, describing to us as well as it can now this corner, now that of the Country of the Soul.”

69. Underhill, 150.

through preliminaries; detached himself from his chief entanglements; [and] re-orientated his instinctive life. The result is a new and solid certitude about God, and his own soul's relation to God: an *enlightenment* [author's italics] in which he is adjusted to new standards of conduct and thought. In the traditional language of asceticism, he is 'proficient' but not yet 'perfect.'<sup>70</sup>

### *Unitive*

Hauser sees perfection as the movement to the final (unitive) stage of the classical model of spiritual growth. He describes it as a "perfect friendship" with God whereby,

The activity of the Spirit has increased to such a degree that we are held in union with the Lord with almost no use of our faculties. In addition, we find that we are slipping into a union that is not mediated by self-consciousness. In the illuminative way, we enjoyed a conscious attentiveness to the presence of God; in the unitive way we find ourselves slipping away from this conscious attentiveness, forgetting ourselves and being absorbed in oneness with God....[S]elf-forgetfulness and absorption [in God] may be present in earlier stages of prayer, but it is not present with the same degree or frequency. This prayer is called 'advanced contemplation.'<sup>71</sup>

Those practicing advanced contemplation would not be drawn to a study for developing a rule of life. Had they reached that level of prayer, they would have already developed the disciplines that the Macchia program seeks to facilitate. Underhill sees the stages preceding the unitive as indicative of the journey *to* and the unitive describing the journey *in* God.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, since Christians through the centuries have recognized this stage as the ultimate goal, this research study can be a good place for the inmates to begin their own spiritual adventure. In any case, of those who remain on the spiritual journey, Keating notes various ways of viewing God – parent, companion, friend, soulmate, lover, betrothed, and spouse. All of those designations point to relationships with various

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70. Underhill, 173-174.

71. Hauser, 20.

72. Underhill, 97.

degrees of intimacy. Keating further explains, “There’s a certain progression of intimacy and transformation that takes place in human development that involves a communion with God that is permanent and signals the possibility of further consciousness.”<sup>73</sup> At any rate, changes in the relationship with God can be indicated by motivations for and changes in spiritual practices. In this study and in all believers’ lives, “the Creator remains the leader and sets the time, place, and pace for each movement that he wants to share with us.”<sup>74</sup>

...the life God invites...

It is important to note that any discussion of the spiritual journey cannot be exhaustive. As Underhill explains, a personal and experienced description by some is not diagrammatic for all.<sup>75</sup> Yet, it is also important to recognize that God does call or invite believers to participate in their own spiritual journey with him. Developing a rule of life is one way the inmates can answer and cooperate with God in pursuing this call to him. “The Holy Spirit knows the spiritual practices, relationships and experiences that best suit our communion with God.”<sup>76</sup> Although it is clear that the inmates did not have to come to prison in order to start their spiritual journey, they do not have to remain estranged from God once incarcerated. Calhoun explains,

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73. Thomas Keating, *Reflections on the Unknowable* (Brooklyn: Lantern, 2014), 474.

74. Keating, *Manifesting God*, chap. 10.

75. Underhill, 60, 124, 160. “God’s way of making his presence known...is as individualized and personal as each mother’s way of holding and comforting her own child; it is a very intimate thing.” See also Ruth Haley Barton, *Invitation to Solitude and Silence: Experiencing God’s Transforming Presence* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004), chap. 7, Kindle where she says God’s revelations are “as individualized and personal as each mother’s way of holding comforting her own child; it is a very intimate thing.”

76. Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005), intro., Kindle.

No matter where desperation and desire begin, there are spiritual disciplines that are fueled by just those desires and desperations. Not everyone is connected to their God-given desires. People who are cut off from their desperations and longings are severed from an artery of connection with God and themselves. So shepherds must listen to where desire has been derailed or grown compulsive.<sup>77</sup>

Macchia's course can be a shepherding tool to help the inmates begin and maintain a new relationship with God. When speaking of the importance of practicing the spiritual disciplines, which are inherent in creating the rule of life, Bourgeault says, "This ancient and universal strategy is really at the basis of all genuine asceticism (that is, asceticism in the service of conscious transformation, not as a means of penance or self-mortification). And there is good reason for this: the strategy works."<sup>78</sup>

Although prison has its own distractions (i.e., noise, fear, threats, etc.), it may have less than the inmates would experience were they not imprisoned. Prison is a confined space compared to the options available on the outside. Many of them will have an inordinate amount of time to reflect on their lives and their relationship with God. Newberg and Waldman explain, "The spiritual journey is a marathon of seasons....Spiritual disciplines are intentional ways to keep moving through the seasons. They aren't magical means to an effortless race. The disciplines simply provide us with exercises that keep us open to God and aware of the limits of our endurance."<sup>79</sup> They seem to infer that human beings are already pre-wired for the journey and go on to describe the three realities that interact to help us navigate our world – reality outside of our brains and two interior realities (one subconscious and one conscious). Although they

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77. Calhoun, app. 3.

78. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus*, chap. 6.

79. Calhoun, app. 10.

are certain the two internal realities exist, they cannot determine how these realities impact each other. Yet, they have found that spiritual practices can help bridge the gap between the inner and outer realities, bringing us “closer to what actually exists in the world.”<sup>80</sup> Their findings suggest that inmates have an inherent ability to change their perception of their world and their perception of God’s place in it. Thus, inmates in this study may learn to view their prison environment in ways that lessen their anger or violent reactions to it or to others. Furthermore, they may see the development of the spiritual practices of Macchia’s program as the means for them to receive the grace of God<sup>81</sup> in order to change how they usually react. All in all, the least that the spiritual practices may do is change their brains for the better. Newberg and Waldman conclude, “Spiritual practices, even when stripped of religious beliefs, enhance the neural functioning of the brain in ways that improve physical and emotional health.”<sup>82</sup>

Certainly, inmates participating in this study imply that they would like to see changes in their life. How much is another matter. Yet, this may be the opportunity for the Holy Spirit to bring them “face to face with [their] hidden motives and compulsions.”<sup>83</sup> The self-reflections Macchia calls for will require they assess and plan to improve each area of their lives according to biblical standards – probably in ways they have not done previously. “There has to be some degree of withdrawal from the

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80. Newberg and Waldman, chap. 1.

81. Calhoun, intro. She sees spiritual practices as “grace-filled ways of responding to the presence of Christ with our bodies.”

82. Newberg and Waldman, chap. 1.

83. Calhoun, pt. 4.

revolving hall of mirrors in order to find oneself primarily mirrored by God.”<sup>84</sup> Living in an environment of pervasive anger, judgment, and fear will be a challenge for some of them to see themselves differently as they participate in the study and in this aspect of life with God. Internal tension may arise because, on the whole, Macchia’s program presents a divine call to the inmates as a form of self-surrender. “The act of self-giving brings new realms into being. It shows what God is like in new and different ways.”<sup>85</sup>

The weekly class meetings and the repetition of spiritual practices can help solidify the new changes in the inmates’ lives. Newberg and Waldman conclude that the more people immerse themselves in certain ideologies, the more their brains will act as if their beliefs are “objectively real.”<sup>86</sup> What that suggests is that as the inmates continue their spiritual practices in the belief that they are being helped by God, the more *real* God will become to them. In the meantime, the disciplines can continue to support their efforts. The spiritual practices are frameworks which encourage the “heart’s desire to grow in loving God and others.”<sup>87</sup>

The changes that have been suggested as a result of the inmates developing their rule of life may be seen while they are a part of the study or while they are still in prison—or maybe not. The allotted time for the project may be too short for them to see what commitment to spiritual practices garners. Keating insists,

Dedication to God is developed by commitment to one’s spiritual practices for God’s sake. Service to others is the outgoing movement of the heart promoted by

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84. Richard Rohr, *What the Mystics Know* (New York: Crossroad Publishing), chap. 2.

85. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus*, chap. 6.

86. Newberg and Waldman, chap. 7.

87. Calhoun, pt. 1.



compassion....The habit of service to others is developed by trying to please God in what we do and by exercising compassion for others, beginning with those with whom we live....An important part of the response to divine love, once it has been received, is to pass it on to our neighbor in a way that is appropriate in the present moment.<sup>88</sup>

Inmates in this study group may not have enough time to experience noticeable differences in their prison relationships yet. “It takes time and practice to recognize the unconditional love and presence of God as the ultimate and unchanging reality of our life,” says Barton.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, one other important note must be made. Although Rohr says, “union and communion are the goal of what God is doing on earth,” he also says believers cooperate with God by being “transparent and vulnerable.”<sup>90</sup> Inmates may not choose to practice vulnerability and transparency in the face of constant challenges for personal safety. Nonetheless, as Bourgeault says,

[They will have to] allow the gospel to become more and more alive in [them], more and more firmly rooted. Till at last, in the words of that remarkable prayer in Ephesians 3.16-19 (NIV): ‘I pray that out of his glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled with the very nature of God.’<sup>91</sup>

...you to humbly fulfill for Christ’s glory.

In the long run, Macchia’s program points to the divine invitation to mature. Yet, maturity cannot be reached on the basis of the intellect only.<sup>92</sup> In fact, as far as the brain

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88. Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, 15-16, 103.

89. Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*, chap. 6.

90. Rohr, chaps. 5, 6.

91. Bourgeault, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*, chap. 2.

goes, spiritual practices are interchangeable. Newberg and Waldman conclude “you can transfer nearly any religious ideology from one spiritual practice to another and still receive the same neurological benefits from the experience.”<sup>93</sup> Even so, contemplative practices seem to be the way to move beyond the mind.

Meditation practices come in a variety of flavors, each with its own particular way of quieting the ordinary mind and taking you deeper into being.... [Meditation] circumvents our preconceived expectations and mental agendas and opens up that place of immediate knowingness...where we can directly experience the living Jesus.<sup>94</sup>

Thus, the more believers mature, the more they can experience Christ. Keating explains,

Moving beyond vocal prayers and beyond reflection when you feel the attraction to be still is the path to contemplation. This is the moment you should feel free to stop saying the vocal prayers and to follow the attraction to be still because vocal prayers and discursive meditation are both designed to lead one gradually to that secret and sacred place. That is their whole purpose....Ascetical disciplines (such as fasting, vigils, prolonged solitude, periods of silence, ascetical obedience, simplicity of lifestyle) and more disciplines (such as discursive meditation, affective prayer, veneration of icons, psalmody, chanting, the rosary) always included contemplation as part of the Christ-centered goal.<sup>95</sup>

Barton adds the key: “Perhaps one of the most basic things we need to understand about spiritual transformation is that it is full of mystery. We can be open to it, but we can’t accomplish it for ourselves.”<sup>96</sup> Contemplation (Keating) is one way Christians can be open to directly experiencing Christ (Bourgeault), and in this study, centering prayer

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92. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way*, chap. III. See also, Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, 87: “The essential point of all the great spiritual disciplines that the world religions have evolved is the letting go of thoughts. Everything else is subsidiary to that.”

93. Newberg and Waldman, chap. 3.

94. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus*, chaps. 12, 2.

95. Keating, *Intimacy with God*, 112-123.

96. Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*, intro.

facilitates that. It must be noted that centering prayer adds something that other meditative forms do not. Bourgeault explains,

Centering Prayer is somewhat innovative. You might think that all meditation is about achieving a ‘still mind’ or ‘single-pointed concentration’ or ‘pristine awareness.’ In fact, most meditation practices do have these as their goals. But Centering Prayer doesn’t work with the mind at all; it goes straight for the heart. It’s a surrender method, pure and simple, a practice based entirely on the prompt letting go of thoughts as they arise. I often think of it as kenosis in meditation form, a way of patterning into our being that continuously repeated gesture of ‘let go, let go, let go’ at the core of the path that Jesus himself walked.<sup>97</sup>

Keating insists that a growing relationship with God supposes change. He reports, “The emotionalism and sentimentality of childhood are laid aside in favor of a more mature relationship with God.”<sup>98</sup> As the relationship matures, new dynamics are noted. Keating maintains, “If we are on the journey, we are in the Kingdom....It is in bearing our weakness with compassion, patience, and without expecting all our ills to go away that we function best in a Kingdom where the insignificant, the outcasts, and everyday life are the basic coordinates. The Kingdom is in our midst.”<sup>99</sup> Keating is suggesting an important result that may happen for participants in this study – the inmates’ ability to accept their own failings with compassion instead of harshness or avoidance altogether. Calhoun explains, “The goal of the Christian life is not so much a set of behaviors as it is an orientation of the soul toward God and his kingdom.”<sup>100</sup> Keating goes on to provide an apt summation of the believers’ relationship with God:

The grace of Pentecost affirms that the risen Jesus is among us as the glorified

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97. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus*, chap. 12.

98. Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, 27.

99. Keating, *Intimacy with God*, 62.

100. Calhoun, app. 1.

Christ. Christ lives in each of us as the Enlightened One, present everywhere and at all times. He is the living Master who continuously sends the Holy Spirit to dwell within us and to bear witness to his resurrection by empowering us to experience and manifest the fruits of the Spirit and the Beatitudes both in prayer and action.<sup>101</sup>

In the end, when discussing the prison environment and Christian maturity, Rohr's conclusions seem particularly pertinent. He says, "Christian maturity is the ability to joyfully live in an imperfect world.... Faith demands living with a certain degree of anxiety and holding a very real amount of tension. We have to be trained how to do this. The only two things that are strong enough to accomplish this training are suffering and prayer."<sup>102</sup> His summation accounts for the fact that *all* Christians live in a fallen world. Yet, Macchia's program can help those in this study, who are imprisoned, whether they are in the control or experimental group, remain steady as they prayerfully develop and implement their rule of life. They can all have divine assistance.

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101. Keating, *Open Heart, Open Mind*, 138.

102. Rohr, chap. 3.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE PROJECT

#### Introduction

“The inmates ain’t going nowhere,” the chaplain of the prison declared one day as I worried about returning from our lunch break on time to meet with my group. I was volunteering, facilitating a book club. According to him, there was no need to hurry; the inmates would be there whenever we returned. He repeated the same line later when I became anxious after weeks of waiting for the warden’s approval to start my research. Again, he attempted to reassure me while also disavowing the inmates. He insisted I need not worry about having participants for the project because there would always be some. I would later learn that the chaplain was wrong. In the meantime, when the warden finally consented and let me know that the residents of the prison should be referred to as *inmates* and not *prisoners* as I had written in the proposal, I thought that would be the least of my problems. I could easily change the reference. I was wrong. Trouble started with this project *before* the first day of the study.

While waiting for approval, two things happened that made me mildly uneasy. First, as I was still designing the flyer in my mind to recruit participants, one of the inmates on the chapel staff<sup>1</sup> created a signup sheet that presented my research study as a *class*. His flyer gave the impression that my project was no different from any other class offered in the chapel – meeting on a certain day, at a certain time. I was concerned that the prospective participants would not know from the beginning that they were signing

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1. The chapel staff consists of paid chaplains and inmate workers who are not paid. The inmates work as long as they and the chaplains agree; there is no forced labor in the prisons. They can quit; the chaplains can fire them; or they can be transferred to another department.

up to be part of a research study. Had they known, they may have decided differently. However, because I was unsure in this new environment, I accepted their flyer without protest. Second, the chapel staff chose the dorms to participate in the study differently than I had planned. Originally, I wanted to select the two dorms for the study randomly from the five at this prison – one for the control group and one for the experimental group.<sup>2</sup> I reasoned that keeping the groups separated would lessen chances for participants to compare experiences before final observations were made. Normally, inmates from one dorm do not interact with any from other dorms unless they work in the same office, take classes together, or attend the same chapel service. Again, the chaplain's staff made a decision differently than I had planned, and, again, I was silent. They did not randomly select the dorms, and I did not ask why.

In hindsight, it seems that those first deviations foreshadowed trouble to come. At the time, I was happy the chapel workers appeared enthusiastic about the upcoming study. Admittedly, their eager anticipation of my approval of the signup flyer did help to minimize my unease and actually added to my own excitement. For after weeks of waiting, I could finally start my research. Yet, the first day of the project started with more trouble. I arrived at the prison with consent forms, pre-survey questionnaires, the *Crafting a Rule of Life* books by Stephen Macchia, copies of the course syllabus and class rules, and journals for reflections for members of both the control and the experimental groups. I also had copies of prayer logs and handouts on centering prayer for the

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2. Basically, the experimental group would be learning and practicing centering prayer during the course of the study. The control group would not. Because centering prayer allows inner healing to take place, I concluded that its practitioners would then be free to break old patterns of behavior that no longer helped them reach life goals. I was hoping to prove that the experimental group would have an easier time implementing their rule of life than the control group.

experimental group participants. I thought I was fully prepared, but I was not expecting what happened next. The correctional officer at the gate, who never smiled at me and never would tell me – someone else always did – how to successfully go through the metal detector so I could enter the prison during my volunteer visits, took one look at all of my supplies and promptly called the warden. Apparently, I was attempting to bring in *contraband*. Contraband is anything that is not explicitly allowed in the prison. The precise requirement should have been met beforehand with a memo from the chaplain to the warden requesting permission for me to bring in my accurately described and counted items. It is usually an uneventful process for permitted items. However, on this particular morning, the correctional officer's call resulted in an irritated chaplain who had to leave his office, take the long walk to the front gate through more than one locked-until-opened-by-a-correctional-officer-metal-door, and escort my items and me to the chapel. When he finally arrived, he did not hesitate to snap in front of everyone in the lobby that I should have told him I was bringing "all this stuff" into the prison. Once more, I said nothing. I was too excited to care about what he said. He had forgotten to do the memo, and I had forgotten to remind him.

### The Pre-Survey Questionnaire

Because the chaplain did not want to openly advertise a class for Christians-only for fear of a charge of discrimination from other inmates, I had to initially open the class to any interested person. Since my study was actually geared to Christians, I needed a way to identify the target population. Therefore, I started my short pre-survey questionnaire with a question ("Are you a Christian?") to help isolate participants for my research project. I asked the next two questions ("Name the kinds of prayers you have

practiced in the past.” “What kinds of prayers do you practice now?”) to give me more information about the participants. For example, if the inmates had previously or were currently practicing meditation, I could expect them to experience some interference as they learned centering prayer. Since other forms of meditation require the use of a mantra (repetition of a word or phrase) or the focus of attention (i.e., the breath, an image), difficulties could arise for them when they would have to learn how *not* to repeat audible sounds or focus on anything – letting all thoughts, emotions, or physical sensations go. This study was designed for those who would be introduced to centering prayer, not to those who were already practitioners. They would have already realized some of the benefits I was hoping to measure later. The final question of the pre-survey questionnaire (“How often do you pray?”) would help identify inmates who were already disciplined pray-ers. Perhaps, they would be ready to add another prayer practice.

Before the first day of the project, I flipped a coin to randomly select the control and experimental groups. The morning group would be the experimental, and the afternoon group would be the control. Five inmates attended the morning session. I described the purpose of the study and administered the pre-survey questionnaire.<sup>3</sup> After quickly reviewing the results to make sure the attendees were eligible, I explained that participation in the actual study would require further consent. All five agreed to continue. I repeated the process in the afternoon with seven members of the control group. Participants in both groups were pleasant and readily signed all consent forms. Although no one indicated any noticeable reluctance, by the second class meeting, two members of the control group had already changed their minds. Their quick departure

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3. The pre-survey questionnaire is at Appendix A. The class started on July 23, 2013 and was scheduled to last until November 12, 2013.



caused my initial unease to grow. Though I did have the target five members in each group, I immediately began to worry about them completing the study.

### The First Project's Class Meetings

At the initial class meeting, each participant was given a syllabus listing the proposed topics for twelve weeks to help them develop their rule of life and four subsequent weeks to assess its implementation.<sup>4</sup> Also, listed on the syllabus was the planned date for the post-survey questionnaire.<sup>5</sup> Both the control and experimental groups followed the same sixty-minute basic structure: five minutes for opening/reviewing; fifty minutes for short lectures and group discussions; and five minutes for closing/summarizing. Chapter summary sheets were given with instructions to answer all emboldened questions in their reflection journals.<sup>6</sup> Any other reflections were encouraged but optional. Since the experimental group would spend an additional thirty minutes learning about and discussing centering prayer, they also received summary notes from the short instructional lectures on the discipline and prayer logs to record the number of times they practiced during the week.<sup>7</sup> The prayer logs would be returned to me at the beginning of the following week to be tallied. I made sure I emphasized that no one would receive a certificate of course completion unless they

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4. The syllabus is at Appendix B.

5. The post-survey questionnaire is at Appendix C. The post-survey questionnaire was scheduled to be administered on November 12, 2013.

6. Sample summary sheets for Chapter 1 and Chapter 5 are at Appendix D.

7. A sample of the centering prayer handouts is at Appendix E. Participants were encouraged to pray daily.

turned in a written rule of life.<sup>8</sup> A few times extra materials were presented to both groups and are listed below with their corresponding chapter from the Macchia textbook:

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Material</u>
2 – “Gifts”	<p>“Dr. Phil’s Personality Test”<sup>9</sup></p> <p>“The Spiritual Gifts Test”<sup>10</sup></p> <p>“Description of the 4 Primary Temperaments”<sup>11</sup></p>
6 – “Spiritual Priorities”	<p>“The Liturgy of the Hours”<sup>12</sup></p> <p>“What does each hour look like?”<sup>13</sup></p> <p>“What are Spiritual Disciplines?”<sup>14</sup></p>

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8. A sample rule of life worksheet for chapter 10 (“Talent) and the final worksheet for the written rule of life are at Appendix F.

9. “Dr. Phil’s Personality Test” found at <https://www.workerscompensation.com/forums/general/printthread.php?tid=10284> (accessed on July 29, 2013). I informed the class that this test has not been scientifically validated and in no way indicated final or divine authority. It was presented to prompt discussions and journal reflections about their possible talents. Results were compiled and orally given in class.

10. “The Spiritual Gifts Test” found at <http://www.kodachrome.org/spiritgift> (accessed on July 29, 2013). Likewise, I explained that this test has not been scientifically validated. Its 140 questions were administered over several class sessions. Written results were given to each participant at the end of the test.

11. John T. Cocoris, “Description of the 4 Primary Temperaments” found at <http://fourtemperaments.com/Description.htm> (accessed on July 30, 2013).

12. “The Liturgy of the Hours” found at <http://www.romanrite.com/hours.html> (accessed August 28, 2013). Kelli Mahoney, “What are Spiritual Disciplines?” found at <http://christianteens.about.com/od/christianliving/a/What-Are-Spiritual-Disciplines.htm> (accessed on August 28, 2013).

13. “What does each hour look like?” found at <http://www.isi.edu/~chiang/personal/hours.html> (accessed on August 28, 2013). Both “The Liturgy of the Hours” and “What does each hour look like?” were presented to show this group of Protestants one way Catholics practice prayer, which they could also adopt.

14. Kelli Mahoney, “What are Spiritual Disciplines?” found at <http://christianteens.about.com/od/christianliving/a/What-Are-Spiritual-Disciplines.htm> (accessed on August 28, 2013).

## Results of the First Project – The Control Group

At first, classes were encouraging for the participants and me. Members of both groups attended, wrote in their journals regularly, and readily contributed to the discussions. I was ecstatic. Then, I started to notice that they were not talking about what they should have read. They talked about themselves and their Christian journey. If I asked specific questions about the textbook, they looked at me blankly. In my determination to help them, I would point out the answer in the book until one day a control group member's outburst stopped me. He picked up his book and exclaimed, "Who can read this? Hardly anyone in this prison can read this." I was surprised at what he said and at my lack of awareness. I had assumed since I was meeting with adults, they could read the book. The thought never occurred to me that they would struggle with the reading. As a former special education teacher, I was used to teaching children with reading difficulties; I was not expecting this with adults. Had they been children, I would have assessed them at the beginning of the classes to see if they could read the text and make modifications if they could not. If I noted reading deficiencies, I would have rewritten the text in simpler language, assigned a reading partner, or read it orally on a cassette or CD for them to follow along later. I did none of that for this group. Besides, at the time, I did not know if any of those strategies would have been acceptable to these adult men. Until that surprising day, I had no explanation for why they were not answering questions about the book. I just knew they were not. The fact is I did not know my population. My next decision further displayed my ignorance and will be discussed later. I decided to collect their textbooks. No one objected.

I explained that now they would only have to read the one-page interactive summary sheets I would prepare weekly. I was certain they would be so desperate for information on how to change their lives by crafting a rule of life, they would welcome this change. However, they were in the process of showing me that not only was I wrong about them with my reading expectations, so was the chaplain about them always being present. Within the first five weeks, all but one of them had dropped out of the sixteen-week course. This lone participant was the only one to devise a written rule of life and respond to the post-survey questionnaire. He reported that he had a *somewhat difficult* time developing the rule and a *difficult* time living according to it. His conclusion seems understandable. Actions can be harder to do than the words that planned them. Nonetheless, he indicated that he planned to continue practicing his rule of life, noting, “It’s easy to do wrong, hard to do right.” His supposition seems pertinent in the prison system where rule (law) breaking is the reason the vast majority of them are incarcerated to begin with and can continue afterward. At any rate, the results for the control group are summarized in the following table:

Control Group Results

Inmate	Pre-Survey Question <sup>15</sup>	Rule of Life Developed?	Post-Survey Questions <sup>16</sup>	Final Comments <sup>17</sup>
1	P, M, S	Yes	SD/D	

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15. The question on the survey to describe their current prayer practice and to insure no practitioners of centering prayer would be part of the group: “What kinds of prayers do you practice now?” The following legend is used to indicate responses: P-Praying out loud; M-Meditation; T-Praying in Tongues; S-Silent Prayer; C-Chanting; CP-Centering Prayer; O-Other.

16. Applicable questions on the survey were: “I had a \_\_\_\_\_ time developing a rule of life” and “I have had a \_\_\_\_\_ time living according to my rule of life.” The choices were: “difficult” (D); “somewhat difficult” (SD); “easy” (E).

17. “W” and the number indicate the week the participant withdrew before the class formally ended.

2	P, M, S	No		W-4
3	P, M, S	No		W-2
4	S	No		W-5
5	P, M	No		W-3
6	P, M, S	No		W-1
7	P, M, S	No		W-1

### Results of the First Project – The Experimental Group

I was encouraged when I saw the results of the pre-survey questionnaire. Both groups had members who regularly prayed two or three times a day. (Only one member of the experimental group reported praying only once a day.) However, the first hint that the experimental group members might not perform as I expected occurred at the first class meeting. I was hoping they would eagerly decide to practice centering prayer as much as recommended – twice a day. Despite my best efforts to persuade them otherwise, all of them chose to practice only once a day. The sole basis for my expectation for them to commit to more was that they self-reported practicing prayer consistently. My assumption that they would readily increase their prayer practices to include this new discipline at recommended levels was unfounded. Nevertheless, I was not overly concerned about their reluctance to practice centering prayer more. After all, my own discipline had started with only a once-a-day practice for many months before it eventually grew to two. Yet, since I was hoping that centering prayer would help these experimental group members implement their rule of life easier than the control group, I did wonder if one daily session would be sufficient to give them noticeable results during the time allotted for the study. By the end of the project, I could not tell. Only one of them kept his commitment to pray, reporting that he practiced eighty-four times during the first twelve weeks of research. Members were not required to turn in prayer logs during the four weeks that they were assessing the implementation of their rule but were

encouraged to continue the practice. This single experimental group member was the only one to develop a rule of life but did not complete the post-survey questionnaire to report whether he had difficulty implementing his rule or not. It should be noted that one other inmate in this group did complete a rule of life, but he did it weeks after the class ended. The other participants in this group practiced centering prayer about half the time they said they would, and none of them completed the rule of life.

Despite the dismal ending results, as far as developing and implementing the rule of life goes, some positive things can be said about the experimental group. For one thing, their drop-out rate was less than the control group. Their first drop out did not occur until week four, the next not until week eight. By that time, they still had three members compared to only one member in the control group. They did not lose another member until week ten and did not lose the final two until week thirteen. Still, although members of the experimental group attended class more than members of the control group, in terms of developing the rule of life during the allotted time, they had the same results – one. Since neither the inmate who developed his rule during the study nor the one who completed it afterward assessed his implementation, it cannot be said that centering prayer played a significant role. The most that can be concluded is that the more times they prayed, the longer they attended class. Without the post-survey questionnaire, there is no information to support the hypothesis that the implementation of a rule of life is easier for those who practiced centering prayer. A summary of the findings for this group is noted below:

### Experimental Group Results

Inmate	Pre-Survey Question <sup>18</sup>	Rule of Life Developed?	Post-Survey Questions <sup>19</sup>	Prayer Log Results	Final Comments <sup>20</sup>
1	P	Yes		84/84(100%)	W-13
2	P, M, S	No		50/84 (59%)	W-13
3	M, T, S	No		48/84 (57%)	W-10
4	S	Yes		27/84 (32%)	W-8
5	P, M, S	No		21/84 (25%)	W-4

### The Second Project

Because the first study did not end with at least three members as stated in my proposal, I tried again. By this time I had learned from inmates that high attrition rates for classes are the norm at this prison. According to them, other prisons have cultures where learning is emphasized; this one does not. Their reports led to my considering factors that may have led to high drop-out rate I experienced – lack of perseverance; low reading levels; disinterest. Perhaps, a shortened course with reading support could help more of them complete the project. Since I saw that by week four of the previous study, I had lost six of the twelve participants, I proposed three weeks of class meetings ending with participants developing a rule of life and two weeks to assess its implementation. At the end of the five weeks, an exit interview would be required and a post-survey questionnaire would be administered. I added the interview to collect feedback that might help clarify answers on the survey and help me improve the course. Although the normal

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18. The question on the survey: “What kinds of prayers do you practice now?” The following legend is used to indicate responses: P-Praying out loud; M-Meditation; T-Praying in Tongues; S-Silent Prayer; C-Chanting; CP-Centering Prayer; O-Other.

19. Questions on the survey: “I had a \_\_\_\_\_ time developing a rule of life” and “I have had a \_\_\_\_\_ time living according to my rule of life.” The choices were: “difficult” (D); “somewhat difficult” (SD); “easy” (E).

20. If the inmates withdrew from the class before the end, “W” indicates it, followed by a number to mark the week of the withdrawal.

class length at the prison is twelve weeks, the chaplain allowed me to start this abbreviated five-week project. In order to present as much of the information from the previous study into this one, classes had to be held twice a week. For the first time since the study began, I finally did some reflection that did not have to do with my anxiety over losing participants and reminded myself of the reason for the study in the first place. I wanted to help the inmates become better disciples. Whether it took sixteen weeks or five did not matter.

The second project started better than the first. For one thing, I did not have to get approval to bring books past an unhelpful prison lobby worker because I decided not to have the inmates read them anyway. I had no time to assess and/or teach them how to read. However, I did present the information from Macchia's book as class lectures. This time, I was not concerned when the chapel workers duplicated the previous flyer, chose the dorms, and made the final selection of participants. I relied on their knowledge. Yet, because of the small turn-out with the earlier study, my main concern now was whether enough inmates would sign-up and remain to complete the final tasks. I was still hoping to end with at least three members in each group, despite the earlier rapid dropout rate. In the end, eight people formed the control group, and eleven formed the experimental group for the second project.

### The Second Project's Class Meetings

The class structure of the first project was repeated for the second. Sixty minutes consisted of five minutes for opening/reviewing; fifty minutes for short lectures and group discussion; and five minutes for closing/summarizing. A syllabus was also given as



before.<sup>21</sup> I showed them Macchia's textbook and explained that my lecture notes would come primarily from it with no mention of the reading difficulties experienced by the first groups. I had subsequently learned that the inmates were not used to having their own individual copy of books for their classes anyway. At any rate, since this was a much-abbreviated course, I combined chapters from the textbook instead of presenting them one at a time as I generally did previously. For example, in the introductory session, I combined the main ideas from chapters two ("What are My God-Given Gifts, Talents and Temperament?") and four ("What is the Intentional Passion God Has Planted in Me?"). My aim was to inspire the participants enough with considering their possible gifts and talents in this first meeting that they would want to continue the coursework for the next two weeks. I also prepared a more extensive interactive handout for homework following each class.<sup>22</sup> The subsequent sessions focused on chapters six through ten ("Spiritual Priorities," "Relational Priorities," "Physical Priorities," "Financial Priorities," "Missional Priorities," and "Weaving Together Your Personal Rule of Life") to give them guidelines to form their rule of life. Generally, the same extra materials were given as before but because I was concerned that the fast pace of the study did not easily facilitate retention of the lecture information, I also gave them excerpts from my lecture notes as handouts.<sup>23</sup> Finally, the experimental group met for an extra thirty minutes as before, but I doubled the amount of information for their handouts on centering prayer.

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21. Revised syllabus is at Appendix G. There is some overlapping in the dates on this syllabus and the previous one. The first project's meetings were not scheduled to end until November 12, 2013, but by October 22, it was clear that it would not end with the proposed three participants. Therefore, the second project was planned and then started on November 5.

22. Homework Sheet sample is at Appendix H.

23. Lecture Excerpt Handout sample is at Appendix I.

The participants in this short study would only receive a certificate if they completed the post-survey questionnaire *and* the exit interview.

#### Results of the Second Project – The Control Group

More participants developed the written rule of life in the second control group than those of the first project. Three of the eight members who initially formed the group also answered the post-survey questionnaire and participated in the exit interview. In the first study, only one member completed the rule of life and did not complete the only required post-survey questionnaire to receive his completion certificate. I have no explanation for why five members of this control group dropped out after the first class meeting. My best guess is, generally, inmates are not required to attend any class at any time, and they simply chose not to remain in this one. Even if they are mandated by the courts to complete some courses (i.e., anger management, domestic violence, etc.), they have the freedom to decide when. All of those who completed the post-survey questionnaire reported that it was *somewhat difficult* to develop their rule of life. One (Inmate A) attributed his difficulties to primarily “stressing a lot.” Another (Inmate B) noted, “In a prison environment, it is difficult to make long term plans because we have no control over anything as inmates.” The final respondent (Inmate C) reported having to “ask God for help” to complete his. They all repeated these reflections in the exit interview but without further elaboration.

As for assessing how well they implemented their rule, each of these three inmates chose each of the three available responses: *difficult*, *somewhat difficult*, and *easy*. The one (Inmate A) who indicated the *difficult* rating attributed it to being “very impatient” with himself. The other (Inmate B) who reported the *somewhat difficult* rating

noted, “I may have to further modify it to fit my environment and the confines of what is possible and permissible within the prison culture.” During the exit interview, he further spoke of the restrictions of the prison environment but did not provide more specific details about refining his rule. It is clear that at least one of his annual goals would require refinement. For instance, he wrote that he wanted to “find a way to do something special for the people I care about.” During the exit conversation, he could identify the people he was thinking about but was unable to think about ways to demonstrate his feelings. The final inmate (Inmate C) who specified that it was *easy* to implement his rule of life attributed it to “opening [his] heart” and “letting God take control” on the post-survey questionnaire. He continued his passive stance during the exit interview, insisting on God’s agency and none of his own. All in all, Inmate A and Inmate B reported what I expected: implementing the rule of life was more challenging than developing it. The passivity of Inmate C appeared to influence his ability to not only assess the implementation of his rule but the crafting of his rule in the first place. For instance, he reported that he trusted the “Holy Spirit to work and exercise.” He seemed unable to articulate that he, not the Holy Spirit, would be accountable for reaching this goal. The results of the control group are summarized below:

#### Control Group Results

Inmate	Pre-Survey Question <sup>24</sup>	Rule of Life Developed?	Post-Survey Questions <sup>25</sup>	Exit Interview	Final Comments <sup>26</sup>
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24. The question on the survey: “What kinds of prayers do you practice now?” The following legend is used to indicate responses: P-Praying out loud; M-Meditation; T-Praying in Tongues; S-Silent Prayer; C-Chanting; CP-Centering Prayer; O-Other.

25. Questions on the survey: “I had a \_\_\_\_\_ time developing a rule of life” and “I have had a \_\_\_\_\_ time living according to my rule of life.” The choices were: “difficult” (D); “somewhat difficult” (SD); “easy” (E).

1	S				W-1
2	P, M, S				W-1
3	P				W-1
4	P, M, T, S, C				W-1
5	P				W-1
6	P, M, T, S, C, O	Yes	SD/D	Yes	
7	P, M, T, S	Yes	SD/SD	Yes	
8	P, S	Yes	SD/E	Yes	

### Results of the Second Project – The Experimental Group

The experimental group started and ended with more members who completed the project's requirements than the control group. Even so, two of them dropped out after the first week, and four dropped out after the third week. Although the four who dropped out did develop a rule of life, only two of them completed the post-survey questionnaire. None of them participated in the exit interview. Again, I have no explanation for why more than half of the group of eleven participants dropped out before the class formerly ended. Since this group did practice centering prayer, I was hoping to see that they had an easier time than the control group in implementing their rule of life. Overall, their reports did not readily confirm my expectations.

Before discussing their reports, it is important to note that there were two subgroups within the experimental group – those who committed to praying once a day and those who committed to praying twice a day. Some of them kept their commitment better than others. Each of these subgroups had an inmate who prayed significantly more than his peers. One prayed nineteen out of twenty-one times for the once-daily-group, and the other prayed thirty-seven out of forty-two times for the twice-daily-group. Both

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26. If the inmates withdrew from the class before the end, "W" indicates it, followed by a number to mark the week of the withdrawal.

of these inmates reported that it was *somewhat difficult* to develop the rule of life and *somewhat difficult* to implement it. As a result of their report, it appears that centering prayer did not make implementing the rule of life easier, especially when compared to those in the control group who did not practice centering prayer but reported the same results. Yet, most members of the experimental group did report that it was *easy* to implement their rule. Two were in the once-a-day and two were in the twice-a-day prayer subgroups. Both inmates in the once-a-day group said that it was *somewhat difficult* to develop and prayed 66% and 42% of their commitment. The two inmates in the twice-a-day group reported it was *easy* to develop their rule of life and prayed 66% and 59% of their commitment. Interestingly, the person who prayed the least (35% of his commitment) reported it being *easy* to develop his rule but *somewhat difficult* to implement. Perhaps, if all variables were equal, the best conclusion that could be drawn from those who reported ease of implementation is that only a moderate consistency in prayer is necessary for the ease of implementation rating for the rule of life.

The exit interviews proved helpful to me. In preparation for them, I reviewed the inmates' rules of life. Since I received more completed ones during the second project than in the first, I could not help but see that they were not all equal. Some of them used every available space on the spreadsheet with tiny writing, and some had a lot of blank spaces. Not only that, but some of the goals themselves were very different. For example, one inmate had daily goals of "reading the Bible" and "praying", and another had a daily goal of "helping people". The former could probably monitor his progress easier than the latter. The exit interview gave me the chance to assess how well the inmates understood the core concepts and help them make corrections that they could apply later – even after

the project ended. For instance, one of the inmates talked about his struggle to understand what was going on in the class. Another inmate agreed to be his study partner. That seemed like a great idea. He could have someone in his dorm who could help him with the reading and explain things that were not clear about the assignments. However, it was clear from his rule and the exit interview that he still did not understand what was expected of him. For instance, under the heading of “Treasure” where he should have written his financial goals, he wrote: “The way I can live with priorities is God see me through with my problems every week.”

The exit interviews appeared helpful for the inmates also. I noticed that some of them wanted the opportunity to further explain their comments on the post-survey questionnaire. For example, the inmate in the twice-a-day group who prayed the most (88% of his commitment) clarified that he understood that “life means changing” but “making the changes” he says is “the hard part.” He sighed as he insisted, “The more you practice the better you will get.” He seemed to need to express those thoughts to me. Yet, his comments pointed to an ongoing challenge for me in assessing the efficacy of this study. Although his conclusions seem logical, I noticed they were not easily quantifiable for this study or for him. I do not remember but certainly hope that I encouraged him to name some things he could do to show that he *was* making changes in his life. I hope I helped him come up with ways to measure his goals. At any rate, what I do remember is that getting the inmates to talk about specifics, to be more open with me was one of my frustrations. Perhaps, what another inmate shared during his exit interview explains the paucity of details I received from the inmates in general: “I have a hard time talking about things in my life.” At any rate, the most that can be summarized about the

experimental group as a whole is that a greater percentage of them (81%) completed their rule of life compared to the control group of this second project (37.5%) and the experimental group of the first study (20%). The final results of the experimental group are summarized below:

#### Experimental Group Results

Inmate	Pre-Survey Question <sup>27</sup>	Rule of Life Developed?	Post-Survey Questions <sup>28</sup>	Prayer Log Results <sup>29</sup>	Exit Interview	Final Comments <sup>30</sup>
1	S	No				W-1
2	S	No				W-1
3	P	Yes	SD/SD	19/21 (90%)	Yes	
4	M, S	Yes	E/E	28/42 (66%)	No	W-3
5	S	Yes		14/42 (33%)	No	W-3
6	P	Yes		8/42 (19%)	No	W-3
7	M	Yes	SD/E	14/21 (66%)	Yes	
8	P, T, S	Yes	E/SD	15/42 (35%)	No	W-3
9	P, M, S	Yes	SD/SD	37/42 (88%)	Yes	
10	P, S	Yes	SD/E	9/21 (42%)	Yes	
11	P, M,S	Yes	E/E	25/42 (59%)	Yes	

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27. The question on the survey: “What kinds of prayers do you practice now?” The following legend is used to indicate responses: P-Praying out loud; M-Meditation; T-Praying in Tongues; S-Silent Prayer; C-Chanting; CP-Centering Prayer; O-Other.

28. Questions on the survey: “I had a \_\_\_\_\_ time developing a rule of life” and “I have had a \_\_\_\_\_ time living according to my rule of life.” The choices were: “difficult” (D); “somewhat difficult” (SD); “easy” (E).

29. Some participants committed to practicing centering prayer once a day for the three weeks; others committed to practicing twice a day.

30. If the inmates withdrew from the class before the end, “W” indicates it, followed by a number to mark the week of the withdrawal.

## Some Reflections

Although this study did prove that if given the opportunity, inmates could develop a rule of life, it only hinted at the possibility that implementing the rule could be easier as a result of practicing centering prayer. In both projects, more members of the experimental group developed their rule when compared to the control group. However, the implementation data was inconclusive. Neither the lone member of the first experimental group who developed his rule during the class nor the member who developed his after the class formerly ended completed the post-survey questionnaire to report on their ease of implementation. Although four of the final seven participants in the second experimental group did report that it was *easy* for them to implement their rule of life, it should not be readily assumed that their ease was solely a result of their practicing centering prayer. After all, one member of the control group, who did not practice centering prayer also reported that it was *easy* to implement his rule. A brief comparison of the rules indicates that the implementation reports cannot stand alone and actually points to more trouble with the study itself.

Although I noticed during the exit interviews that the rules were markedly different (as they should have been), I did not consider this until well afterward that those differences should have been accounted for before the study began. It seems that I needed a way to rate the difficulty levels of the rules in order to make meaningful comparisons between them. As it stands now, the self-reporting is what was being compared, and the fact is some rules were simply easier to implement than others. Therefore, I cannot deduce from this study that centering prayer resulted in the *easy* implementation of the inmates' rule of life.



There were other problems with this study, also. For instance, the first study may have been too long. It was four weeks longer than the normal class lengths. Even though inmates dropped out from the first week onwards, the repeated comments made by staff and inmates alike are that the culture of this particular prison is not conducive for learning. According to those making the observations, many inmates sign up for classes but very few finish them. I did not ask for statistical evaluations to substantiate their claim. Nonetheless, I did notice that practices of the prison officials could contribute to attrition rates, too. Numerous times inmates explained that they did not come to class because they were not allowed to come out of their dorms although they had the required paperwork to do so. Apparently, after repeated attempts, they stop trying eventually. Still, some of them continue to complete their classes anyway. What makes the difference was beyond the scope of this study.

Although the second project had a better completion rate, it was too short. Those participants did not have enough time to adequately assess the implementation of their rule of life. Now, I can conclude that two weeks hardly seems to be enough time to adequately assess changes in every major area of life that took years to develop beforehand. During the time of the study, however, I was more concerned with completing the project. I lost sight of the fact that some lasting changes in our lives take a long time to develop. Yet, since attrition does seem to be a problem at this prison, a shorter than sixteen – or twelve – week study does seem warranted. Had I not been overly concerned about completing the project, I could have proposed several weeks of assessment before meeting with group members for the post-survey questionnaire. Ironically, during the shorter project, with no prompting from me, one of the control

group members wrote on his post-survey questionnaire, “I wish we had had the full 12 weeks. I would benefit from approaching in depth the process.”

Hindsight has proven to be the best reflection tool for me as far as this project is concerned. I did very little reflection in the beginning. That lack continued as the studies progressed and as my anxiety grew. I hardly paused long enough to consider why I was so anxious. I continually felt as if I were either putting out fires or trying to strike flames to start one. Either I was worried about the number of participants, or I was hoping that the participants I did have would want to do more – pray more, study more, talk more, write more, etc. In the end, much of the trouble I colored this study with started with me. I can now see that I made two wrong assumptions that led to the failure of the first project. First of all, I assumed that the main characteristic I needed in order to minister in a prison was not to be fearful. Certainly, it would seem that I should not have been cowering in fear, but I needed more than not being afraid. For one thing, I also needed to think about my safety. I actually had a false sense of safety – probably because I saw no overtly dangerous situations. Despite the heavy metal, locked doors and the proliferation of correctional officers, the prison seemed to function like any other organization. Yet, it is not; it is a dangerous place. I failed to realize that safety is a top priority in prison for a reason. I would be working with people who had committed crimes and some of whom would continue to do so while imprisoned. The chaplain and the chapel workers knew that and made decisions with my safety in mind. Had I respected their knowledge of the prison environment earlier, I would have gained some insight sooner that would have lessened my initial anxiety about the study. Either I would not have planned a random

selection of the dorms or not worried when it did not occur. The anxiety that began then just seemed to grow.

When the chapel workers selected the dorms, they showed that they knew which dorms should not be considered for this project at all. They knew that the residents' reputation, in general, suggested they would not be willing to make the changes I was dreaming of for them. They knew that some of the inmates would sign up for the class because they simply wanted to get out of the loud, violent dorms; or because a female would be facilitating the class in this male prison; or because they were just bored. Finally, the chapel workers also knew prison policy demanded that only inmates who had not broken the rules for a certain period of time could be allowed in the class – a rule that inmates know also but often try to circumvent by signing up anyway. The chaplain and the chapel workers were trying to select suitable participants for the study and trying to protect me. Because my main concern was having my research go as I planned, I did not value their input. At the time, it seemed like my study was not becoming my own. Interestingly, a female correctional officer was assaulted by an inmate soon after I started volunteering at the prison. The chaplain and staff were quick to inform me so that I would better understand the prison culture. I do not know if they knew how safety conscious I was *not*, but I am glad they did tell me. Their report did start to counteract my cavalier attitude, but I have to admit, only a little.

One other problem of the study that originated with me was to assume that the inmates' values were the same as mine. Because of that erroneous assumption, I experienced avoidable disappointment early in the project, and it continued to the end. I was certain that my enthusiasm to help the inmates change their lives by crafting a rule of

life would be matched by their willingness to do so. Not only did I expect to have a large pool of applicants from which to make random selections for my study groups in the beginning, but I also expected those who started would stay until the end. When neither happened, I became frustrated. The more they dropped out, the more frustrated I became. I forgot that I was doing a *study*, that I was to be an observer. Instead, I became a discouraged participant whose main observations had to do with how the study was not going as I planned.

Had I not continued in my presumptions, I may have been able to observe how I was delivering the course to the inmates and perhaps had experienced better results. Nonetheless, I am not sure I could have recovered from the textbook fiasco. Even now, I cannot think of a way to do so. If I continued with the books, I probably would have continued to lose the struggling readers. Hardly anyone would want to continue with something with which they lacked proficiency. However, taking up the books also probably sealed my doom. Every week the remaining members may have been reminded that they had failed at something again – to complete the reading for this class. At the time, I could not understand why they did not seem to appreciate *my* efforts to keep them in class. Now, I believe no amount of my trying to fill in the gaps with a weekly summary sheet could overcome one main point they had lived with for years. That is, they were not like many other people; they could not read adult books. Had I to do again, I would at least insist on high school graduates for course participants. At the time, it was clear that I did not know my ministry context.

Despite my anxiety, I did learn some lessons about working with these inmates. One was that certificates were very important to some of them. Some inmates proudly

keep their certificates in folders and will often show them to anyone, whether requested or not. If I had realized the importance of certificates earlier, I could have used that information to my advantage when I first introduced the course. Though certificates indicate personal accomplishments, some of them mean more than others to a parole board. For example, an art journal certificate may not be significant, but an anger management or cognitive behavior one might be. I could have explained how my class could demonstrate to a parole board that they had made significant changes in their lives. Perhaps, that would have provided enough incentive for some of them to complete the course. I will use certificate knowledge in the future though.

I also learned other lessons about the certificates, too. For instance, during the first weeks of class, when I repeatedly stressed the importance of completing the rule of life in order to get a certificate, I did not realize that what I said did not match what I envisioned. Unbeknownst to the inmates, I spoke of the written rule of life, but I also pictured them completing the post-survey questionnaire. I should have made both requirements clear. Again, I assumed their values were mine. My habit is to complete all requirements for a course; theirs was to do whatever it took to get a certificate. In the first project, the two inmates who did complete the rule of life – one during the allotted time and one afterward – managed to get the message to me that they wanted their certificates after the class had ended. I never saw or heard from either of them after they received their certificates, and they did not mention or complete the post-survey questionnaire.

The second project taught me something about inmates that also had to do with certificates. By then, I had made it clear to both the experimental and control groups that the written rule *and* exit instruments (post-survey questionnaire, interview) would be

required to get a certificate. I thought I was ready for the likes of the inmate who sent me his rule after the first class had ended. Either he spent very little reflection time in writing his rule, or he wrote just enough to garner a certificate. By requiring the exit interview, I concluded that I would have the opportunity to point out to others like him some areas that needed refinement (i.e., “What does it mean when you say you will ‘present my body holy and acceptable’”? “Explain how you would ‘spend time in prayer, fasting, revival, ceremony, and trips’ while you are incarcerated?”). Yet, four of the ten who did complete the rule of life in the second project did not participate in the exit interview. That meant almost half the class did not receive certificates. Either certificates are not as important as I assume, or they were not allowed out of their dorms to come to the exit interview. Either way, it was a signal to me not to become complacent in any knowledge about inmates; they will probably continue to surprise me.

The final lessons I learned as a result of this project has to do with the tools I used. The pre-survey questionnaire functioned well enough to isolate the target population but did very little to assess how the inmates were currently living their own devised rule beyond asking about the types and frequency of their prayers. I started my initial class meeting with the statement, “You already have a rule of life,” but I did not assess it in any way. I probably should have devised a questionnaire or some other tool to see how they were already spending their time, building their relationships, stewarding their resources, etc. and compare it to the new plan they developed as a result of my project. My task would have remained the same – to see if the experimental group had an easier time implementing their rule than the control group. It would have given them the opportunity to make their own comparisons. At any rate, the most sobering lesson I

learned from this phase of the study is that I almost forgot why I did it in the first place. I said I wanted to help the inmates become better disciples of Christ. I tried to give the impression that I accepted them, but underlying the words of my mouth was my attempt to impose my will on them in the least and demonstrated my arrogance at best. They were not to be made into whatever image I had for them. I seemed to have forgotten that the ultimate goal for any Christian is to be formed into the image of Christ (See Romans 8.29; 1 Corinthians 15.49; 2 Corinthians 3.18; Colossians 3.10). Although some of the lessons I learned in this study about inmates and about myself were hard to bear, I hope it has made all of us better disciples of Christ in some way.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

#### Introduction

*“It will happen to you, too. The first thing that happened to me when I started working here was I lost my sense of smell. The next thing I lost was my sense of compassion.”*  
(Co-worker, April 17, 2018)

Those startling words were spoken to me as a co-worker and I walked out of one of the offices at the prison. We both had just experienced the intractable attitude of the person we needed to help us perform our duties. He was trying to convince me that eventually I would be just like her; I, too, would become *institutionalized*. That is, I would end up being unhelpful, vindictive, and self-seeking – to other staff members and inmates alike. I chuckled and disagreed with him about the likelihood of my losing my compassion but admitted I had already lost my sense of smell.<sup>1</sup> I never did find out how this maintenance worker noticed his losses or how he tied them together.

At any rate, it is not unrealistic to suspect that the prison setting can impact and possibly change for the worse all who pass through its gates, despite its changes in its practices through the centuries. In his *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Michel Foucault recounts a cruel prison scene that no longer exists:

On 2 March 1757 Damiens the regicide was condemned ‘to make the *amende honorable* before the main door of the Church of Paris, where he was to be ‘taken and conveyed in a cart, wearing nothing but a shirt, holding a torch of burning

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1. Surprisingly, I found out later there *is* an olfactory/empathy connection. See Marcello Spinella, “A Relationship Between Smell Identification and *Empathy*,” *International Journal of Neuroscience* 112, no. 6 (July 2002): 605-612 at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/11116095\\_A\\_relationship\\_between\\_smell\\_identification\\_and\\_empathy](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/11116095_A_relationship_between_smell_identification_and_empathy) (accessed April 19, 2018). Based on the results of a self-rated empathy questionnaire and a smell-identification test, researchers found that the more empathetic participants identified more smells with the right nostril than with the left. They concluded that this may be attributed to the shared neuroanatomical connection between the right nostril and the right hemisphere of the brain. The right brain is associated more with emotions.



wax weighing two pounds'; then, 'in said cart, to the Place de Grève, where, on a scaffold that will be erected there, the flesh will be torn from his breasts, arms, thighs and calves with red-hot-pincers, his right hand, holding the knife with which he committed the said parricide, burnt with sulphur, and on those places where the flesh will be torn away, poured molten lead, boiling oil, burning resin, wax and sulphur melted together and then his body drawn and quartered by four horses and his limbs and body consumed by fire, reduced to ashes and his ashes thrown to the winds' (*Pièces originale...*, 372-4).

'Finally, he was quartered,' recounts the *Gazette d'Amsterdam* of 1 April 1757. 'This last operation was very long, because the horses used were not accustomed to drawing; consequently, instead of four, six were needed; and when that did not suffice, they were forced, in order to cut off the wretch's thighs, to sever the sinews and hack at the joints ....'

'It is said that, though, he was always a great swearer, no blasphemy escaped his lips; but the excessive pain made him utter horrible cries, and he often repeated: "My God, have pity on me! Jesus, help me!" The spectators were all edified by the solicitude of the parish priest of St. Paul's who despite his great age did not spare himself in offering consolation to the patient.'<sup>2</sup>

Despite the end of this horrific eighteenth-century practice, some things in the criminal justice system remain the same. The convicted person will be sentenced to some punishment; prison staff members will enforce the punishment; and a clergy person may be available to offer words of consolation or encouragement to the convicted and/or to the prison employees. What my research project ended up showing is that all three characters – inmates, staff, and clergy – impact each other in ways that can affect recidivism rates. If the prisons' primary purpose is to punish and not help the inmates develop new life skills and change their behavior; if the staff, charged with enforcing the courts' punishment, hinder the inmates' attempts for rehabilitation; and if the chaplain does not actively work with the inmates and the security officers to help inmates make changes in their lives, the prison experience will more than likely be repeated by the inmates. Though my study was rife with problems, it did suggest some information that

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2. *Pièces originales et procédures du procès fait à Robert-François Damiens*, III, (1757): 372-4, quoted in Michael Foucault, trans. Alan Sheridan, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House, 1977), 3.

can be useful in the prison setting. After discussing the project and the influence of the prison system on its implementation, I will continue with reflections on the function of chaplains in the prison setting. Finally, I will argue how chaplains can emerge as leaders in the prison environment to help reduce recidivism.

### Final Reflections on the Study

Although the study did not unequivocally demonstrate that centering prayer helped the inmates implement a rule of life easier, it did help me draw one main conclusion. That is, a rule of life and centering prayer both can be beneficial in the prison system for helping to reduce recidivism but probably should be separate endeavors. Until I re-consider the validity of my assessment process, I do not think replication of the current study is in order. Yet, four years after completing the project, volunteering, and working in the prison where I did the research, I can see how Stephen Macchia's program<sup>3</sup> can help inmates plan and implement changes in their lives from a Christian perspective. As a chaplain, I am required to teach religious education and life skills classes. Macchia's plans encompass both. I can also see the value of teaching centering prayer in the prison setting and will discuss its benefits later. Therefore, I do plan to implement separate rule of life and centering prayer classes in the chapel's program but with some proposed changes as a result of the study.

### Rule-of-Life-Only Classes

There are several things I would change in a rule-of-life only class. First of all, as stated in the previous chapter, participants must have at least a high school diploma in order to read Macchia's book. Although I assume I summarized his text adequately in the

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3. Stephen Macchia, *Crafting a Rule of Life: An Invitation to the Well-Ordered Way* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2012).

previous studies, there is no doubt I missed some things others in the group would have noticed and found valuable had they read the book themselves. Their personal engagement with the text could have added richness to the group that was limited by my solo lecturing voice. Next, at the beginning of the study, I would give the inmates a spreadsheet similar to the one they would complete at the end to record their current rule of life. On this initial sheet, they would write about the things they presently do as disciples of Christ to show their spiritual, relational, physical, financial, and relational priorities.<sup>4</sup> I wrongly assumed they were not addressing any of those areas before my study. A before- and after- comparison of the spreadsheets could permit them and me to see how much they have grown as disciples as a result of the project. I was so consumed with completing the study, I had forgotten that the purpose of the project in the first place was to help them become better disciples.

Another change would be in the length of the class. My first project was too long (sixteen weeks) for inmates to commit to and complete, and the second project was too short (six weeks) for them to grasp course content and adequately assess their growth. Yet, because I strongly believe the course information requires time to make meaningful reflections, I would lengthen the overall course to twenty-four weeks. However, I would break this longer class into four six-week blocks. Perhaps, they would be more likely to make one six-week commitment at a time. To encourage and help them I would also add the opportunity for one-on-one support during the six-week classes. I have noticed that some of them enjoy counseling sessions with the chaplains. During the sessions, they could discuss anything that was unclear during the class meetings and/or anything else

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4. These are the areas Stephen Macchia presents in *Crafting a Rule of Life*.

that might be preventing them from completing the class requirement of planning and implementing their rule of life. It would also give me an opportunity to assess their progress and make recommendations throughout the course instead of waiting until the end as was done previously.

My final proposed change for the rule-of-life-only class would be to modify some of the ending requirements. First, I would delay the post-survey questionnaire and exit interviews. I believe participants need at least a month or more to adequately assess how well they implemented their rule of life. Previously, their assessments occurred almost immediately upon completion of the course. Next, I would add the requirement of making a mock parole board presentation. Many times inmates only sign-up for classes they believe will make a difference to parole boards (i.e., domestic violence, conflict resolution, anger management, etc.). Not only would the parole board presentations help them prepare for the actual, but it might also be enough incentive to help them complete the course. Admittedly, this twenty-four-week long course is twice the length of the usual twelve weeks that the Department of Corrections recommends and that they already have difficulty completing. However, I have noticed that more inmates complete the forty-week JumpStart course than any of our other courses. JumpStart, they tell me, looks good to parole boards and helps prepare and assist them for the transition to life after prison. This longer course may be able to meet those expectations, also.

#### Centering-Prayer-Only Classes

One recent example explains why I believe a centering prayer class is also needed in the prison but perhaps should be offered separately. Although I have not been at the prison long enough to see any inmates return, I have often heard inmates and staff both

insist on the likelihood. I never thought a particular inmate would prove their point. His self-devised rule of life was so impressive that correctional officers and inmates alike remarked on his personal changes. He followed his rule of life for over a year. During that time, his roommate, a chapel worker, gave him such a glowing recommendation that I allowed him to work in the chapel. After a while, I also became impressed with him. When he volunteered to teach a class because the previous inmate instructor was transferred, I quickly agreed. Brief conversations with him always made me think that change was possible in the prison setting if an inmate wanted it enough. His example convinced me that implementing a rule of life could transform an inmate's life – even without the practice of centering prayer. When he was paroled, his roommate arranged for his own family to provide support for him. Within four days, he was in the county jail. Allegedly, he was arrested for some of the same behaviors that landed him in prison in the first place and that had continued long after his incarceration, until he made it look as if he had changed. We were stunned. Then, I remembered that although I had implemented a rule of life years before I started practicing centering prayer, I did not see the biggest changes in my life until after I had been practicing centering prayer for almost seven years. Some changes occur slowly. Thomas Keating says, “The spiritual journey is a long trip.”<sup>5</sup> Therefore, I came to believe that some inmates who have already developed their own rule of life might benefit from a centering prayer class. Again, its benefits will be discussed later.

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5. Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart* (New York: Continuum, 1992), 106. Keating also says, “The Divine Therapeutic process normally takes years to negotiate” in *On Divine Therapy* (New York: Lantern, 2012), 167. For others who commented on the fact that spiritual transformation takes a long time, see Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005), app. 10, Kindle and Peter Scanzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: Unleash a Revolution in Your Life in Christ* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006), chap. 6, Kindle.

In the meantime, I would make only one major change from the way I conducted the study for the centering prayer segment. I would practice the discipline along with the inmates as part of the class. As a relatively new female volunteer, I was uncomfortable with the idea of closing my eyes in a small classroom with male inmates during the study. As a chaplain, I am more comfortable with the inmates, but, still, I must always be alert to the possibility of violence or misbehavior from the inmates. Therefore, I will not close my eyes completely with them but will have instead a soft gaze to the floor. I can conduct the class in the larger main sanctuary of the chapel building, which will allow more distance between participants and early detection of movement. Since the chapel is quiet, at least they would have one session per week of not having to pray through the incessant noise of the dorms. Maybe, after they have been practicing the prayer for some time, they may be led by the Holy Spirit to take the rule of life class or vice versa.

### The Role of the Prison

By focusing primarily on the inmates' choices and behavior, I missed other key variables that probably affected the outcome of the project. For instance, I believe the prison system itself played a major role as well. Had I taken the culture of the setting seriously, not only could I have been less discouraged during the project, but I could have been more proactive. In his 1971 Stanford Prison Experiment, social psychologist, Philip Zimbardo, showed how much a prison system could affect the inmates and the correctional officers. During his study, volunteers acted as guards and as prisoners (as inmates were then called). The *guards* were allowed to go home after eight-hour shifts, but the *prisoners* stayed in the pretend prison. He terminated the experiment after only six days because it was adversely affecting the participants. It should have ended after

only three.<sup>6</sup> By then, the *guards* were already doling out indiscriminate punishments, and he, as the *warden*, had already started to lose his researcher objectivity and empathy. For example, following a response to a rumor that one of the *inmates*, who had to be released after a crying and screaming mental breakdown, was planning to attack the *prison*, he writes: “In my role as prison superintendent, my mind has become focused on the most important issue facing the head of any institution: What must I do to ensure the safety and security of the institution in my charge?”<sup>7</sup> Instead of reflecting on why the *inmate* had the mental break, he demonstrated his own loss of judgment by choosing to try convincing the civil authorities to let him move the experiment to the old city jail. He was more concerned about defending the *prison* from the supposed attack. Zimbardo continues, “What must that police officer be thinking about a psychology professor who believes he is a prison superintendent, wildly fearful about some assault on ‘his prison?’ ‘Nutcase,’ maybe? ‘Over the top,’ likely. ‘Psycho psychologist,’ probably.”<sup>8</sup> Rather than stop an experiment he could no longer control, he worked for its continuance. At another time when he saw an *inmate* lying on the floor and coughing, he gave the glassy-eyed student some cough drops and told him he could leave. Yet, Zimbardo ended the conversation by telling the participant it would be better for him if he did not “spend so much time and

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6. Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil* (New York: Random House, 2007), 72. See Zimbardo, 86 where he says, “After less than three days into this bizarre situation, some of the students role-paying prison guards have moved far beyond mere playacting. They have internalized the hostility, negative affect, and mind-set characteristic of some real prison guards, as is evident from their shift reports, retrospective diaries, and personal reflections.”

7. Zimbardo, 87.

8. Zimbardo, 88.

energy rebelling,”<sup>9</sup> showing very little regard for that *inmate*’s health as he did for the one who had to leave.

It has taken Zimbardo over forty-years to be able to write about his findings honestly. After reviewing tapes and transcripts, he says he was finally able to see how twenty-four healthy (mentally and physically), middle-class men began “behaving sadistically – demeaning, degrading, and hurting the *prisoners* day in and night out” and showing “little sympathy for the plight of the suffering *inmates*” even as the *inmates* became more passive.<sup>10</sup> It took him all those years to conclude that it was not simply the disposition<sup>11</sup> of the participants – who were randomly assigned to their roles – that contributed to their behaviors, but the prison system itself was a main contributor. He states,

At the start of this experiment, there were no differences between the two groups; less than a week later, there were no similarities between them. It is reasonable, therefore, to conclude that the pathologies were elicited by the set of situational forces constantly impinging upon them in this prisonlike setting. Further, this Situation was sanctioned and maintained by a background System that I helped create.<sup>12</sup>

In my own study, when the inmates repeatedly insisted that the culture at this prison was not conducive for learning, I ignored them. I assumed that my class would be a social bubble – isolated from its sociological moorings. I disregarded their complaints about certain correctional officers not allowing them out of their rooms to attend classes. I never thought they may have been telling the truth – that their efforts to come to class were being routinely sabotaged by prison staff members. Nor did I consider that the officers were operating in a social construct based on power. I was naïve and wrongly

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9. Zimbardo, 72.

10. Zimbardo, 203. See Zimbardo, 216 where he also writes, “The initial script for guard or prisoner role-playing came from the participants’ own experiences with power and powerlessness, of their observation of interactions between parents, of their responses to the authority of doctors, teachers, and bosses, and finally from the cultural inscriptions written upon them by movie accounts of prison life. Society had done the training for us. We had only to record the extent of their improvisation with the roles they played.”

11. See Zimbardo, 7 where he describes disposition as the “personal qualities that lead to action: genetic makeup, personality traits, character [and] free will.”

12. Zimbardo, 197.



assumed that this project was only about the inmates and me – as if *our* (more accurately, *my*) desires to have them complete the course was the only social system that impacted them. Zimbardo says, “Most of us have a tendency both to overestimate the importance of dispositional qualities and to underestimate the importance of situational qualities when trying to understand the causes of other people’s behavior.”<sup>13</sup> Yet, it must be noted that he does hold individuals accountable for their decisions. He continues,

Although I preach the power of the situation, I also endorse the power of people to act mindfully and critically as informed agents directing their behavior in purposeful ways. By understanding how social influence operates and by realizing that any of us can be vulnerable to its subtle and pervasive powers, we can become wise and wily consumers instead of being easily influenced by authorities, group dynamics, persuasive appeals, and compliance strategies.<sup>14</sup>

Zimbardo is not alone in suggesting the influence of social structures on human behavior during difficult times. Christopher Browning points to the situational factors that helped turn a group of regular citizens who made up the Reserve Police Battalion 101 in Poland into a killing unit during World War II. He writes,

In mid-March 1942 some 75 to 80 percent of all victims of the Holocaust were still alive, while 20 to 25 percent had perished. A mere eleven months later, in mid-February 1943, the percentages were exactly the reverse. At the core of the Holocaust was a short, intense wave of mass murder. The center of gravity of this mass murder was Poland, where in March 1942, despite two and a half years of terrible hardship, deprivation, and persecution, every major Jewish community was still intact, and where eleven months later only the remnants of Polish Jewry survived in a few rump ghettos and labor camps. In short, the German attack on the Jews of Poland was not a gradual or incremental program stretched over a long period of time, but a veritable blitzkrieg, a massive offensive requiring the mobilization of large numbers of shock troops.<sup>15</sup>

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13. Zimbardo, 8.

14. Zimbardo, 21.

15. Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 2017), xv.

While Browning considered explanations such as the negative effects of a war environment, anti-Semitism, obedience to superiors' orders, and indoctrination to account for the actions of most (80-90%) of those working-class men, he ultimately attributed their actions to group pressure. He argues that their peers set the standards for their behaviors, and they overwhelmingly concurred by participating in mass shootings and ensuring the deportations of Jews to death camps.<sup>16</sup>

It may seem unreasonable to compare the actions of young, middle-class men participating in an out of control experiment and older, working-class men participating in a war decades ago to the men and women currently working in a penal institution. However, their participation in socially supported systems suggests otherwise. Both Browning and Zimbardo agree that the penchant for the brutalization and killing of other human beings is not inherent. Yet, individual qualities seem to give way to group demands. The need to belong is what both researchers agree is inherent.<sup>17</sup>

Ultimately, I believe Zimbardo's description of what happens in the prison social system is applicable to my context. For the last few years, the prison has been having difficulty retaining newly-hired correctional officers. I can see how new officers are at-risk for turning into the mean, uncaring authorities that Zimbardo witnessed during his experiment and that I observe frequently in the prison where I work. Zimbardo writes,

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16. Browning, 159, 223-3.

17. Zimbardo, 259. See Browning, 161: "[With the exception of a few, most of ] the men of the battalion had not seen battle or encountered a deadly enemy. Most of them had not fired a shot in anger or ever been fired on....Once the killing began, however, the men became increasingly brutalized. As in combat, the horrors of the initial encounter eventually became routine, and the killing became progressively easier. In this sense, brutalization was not the cause but the effect of these men's behavior." Browning goes on to point out at Browning, 240: "The emotional power and need for belonging enabled the Nazis to preside over a 'moral revolution,' which the western tradition of universalism, humanity, and individual responsibility based on a guilt culture was replaced by a shame culture that elevated loyalty to and standing within the group to be the new moral fulcrum of German society."

Situational power is most salient in novel settings, those in which people cannot call on previous guidelines for their new behavioral options. In such situations the usual reward structures are different and expectations are violated. Under such circumstances, personality variables have little predictive utility because they depend on estimations of imagined future actions based on characteristic past reactions in familiar situations – but rarely in the kind of new situation currently being encountered say by a new guard or prisoner.<sup>18</sup>

It was not until after I visited a few other prisons subsequent to my study that I realized that prison environments do make a difference. At those institutions, I spoke with inmates who were encouraged to attend self-help, educational, and vocational classes and took seriously the warning that they would be transferred to other prisons if they did not. I was repeatedly told that staff members, from the wardens on down the chain-of-command, emphasize the rehabilitation culture at those institutions. Thus, those inmates feel supported in their own efforts to make good life choices. That is not so at the institution where my research project was conducted, nor is it apparent currently. Recently, I expressed my frustration to one of the older inmates at noticing inmates continuing to drop out of classes that I believe would help them. He quietly stated, “Sometimes, the best way to support them is to personally encourage them to go to class.” His advice is the exception. The vast majority of the time I am told, “They are grown men. You can’t make them come to class.” Zimbardo states, “It is a truism in psychology that personality and situations interact to generate behavior; people are always acting within various behavioral contexts.”<sup>19</sup> In the end, I believe I would have observed better project completions when I did the study and better course completions

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18. Zimbardo, 212.

19. Zimbardo, 319. Browning, 234: “In addition to the fact that behavior can change attitude, another aspect of the dynamic relationship between disposition and situation is that situations themselves are not static or objective but rather subjective, because they are perceived, construed, and interpreted by the people in them.”

now at another institution with a rehabilitative instead of the punitive and restrictive culture of the prison where I work.

### Counteracting the Influence of the Prison Social System

Because prison is a harsh environment, many inmates conclude that their personal safety is of the utmost importance. What they do not realize is that often their self-protection measures prevent their “growing up spiritually and emotionally.”<sup>20</sup> Their failure to deal with their own internal pain can actually contribute to the violence they face daily. Michael Singer explains, “Inner pain [that is not dealt with] is always there, underneath, hidden by the layers of our thoughts and emotions....People don’t normally ask why; they just try to keep it from happening.”<sup>21</sup> All too often, inmates are not successful in keeping themselves safe in the violent atmosphere of threats, beatings, stabbings, and killings. If they knew as Singer goes on to say: “Because pain is at the core of the heart, it radiates out and affects everything you do,”<sup>22</sup> more of them would probably make different choices to deal with the demands of prison life. While physical protection remains critical, some of them do choose to counteract the prison environment, whether they are Christians or not. They manage to avoid being pulled into the surrounding vortex of violence.

For some Christians, however, regardless of how strongly they assert their beliefs, they will not be able to implement their desired rule of life. Richard Rohr warns,

The Gospel cannot happen in your head alone. You never think yourself into a

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20. Scazzero, chap. 7.

21. Michael A. Singer, *The Untethered Soul: The Journey Beyond Yourself* (Oakland: New Harbinger Publications, 2007), 100-101, Kindle. See also Calhoun, pt. 3: “The Spirit often brings us face to face with hidden motives and compulsions.”

22. Singer, 99.

new way of living. You invariably live yourself into a new way of thinking.... Call it grace, enlightenment, peak experience, baptism in the Spirit, revelation, consciousness, growth, or surrender, but until such a threshold is passed, people are never helped in any true, lasting sense.<sup>23</sup>

Rohr's observation that rote memorization of the Bible is not enough for lasting change is easily observable in the prison setting. I have noticed many Christian inmates can quote Scriptures very well, but often those same men are unable to integrate their Biblical knowledge with practical ways to stay out of trouble. I am constantly asked for Bibles by inmates who break the rules and end up in solitary confinement as a result.<sup>24</sup> Scazzero explains, "Many people know the truths of the Bible relatively well.... They believe wholeheartedly they should be living them. The problem is they don't know how."<sup>25</sup> Keating agrees with Rohr that changes must occur at a level deeper than the intellect. He writes,

If in your psyche there are obstacles to opening yourself to God, divine love begins to show you what these are. If you let go of them, you will gradually unfold in the presence of God and enjoy His Presence. The inner dynamism of contemplative prayer leads naturally to the transformation of our whole personality. Its purpose is not limited to your moral improvement. It brings about a change in your way of perceiving and responding to reality. This process involves a structural change of consciousness.<sup>26</sup>

What is important to note is that Keating's idea of personal transformation requires a change in consciousness that is facilitated by contemplative prayer.

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23. Richard Rohr, *What the Mystics Know: Seven Pathways to Your Deeper Self* (New York: Crossroad, 2015), chap. 7, Kindle.

24. It is very difficult to determine who makes sincere requests. The correctional officers warn me to refrain from sending the Bibles to solitary confinement, insisting that the inmates use the thin pages of the Bibles as rolling papers for handmade cigarettes or synthetic marijuana. However, their right to practice their religion is constitutionally protected. I send them Bibles.

25. Scazzero, chap. 9.

26. Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, 95.

## Benefits of Spiritual Practices, Including Centering Prayer

Centering prayer<sup>27</sup> can be the discipline inmates practice to help assist with their transformation and to help them withstand some of the negative prison trappings. Keating insists, “It [centering prayer] requires doing it every day. That is extremely important when we consider the other influences that are bearing down upon us.”<sup>28</sup> Diligent practice of it and other spiritual disciplines can give the inmates opportunities to be available to the divine influence instead of the pervasive negativity they face. Not only can practicing the disciplines function as a bulwark, but it can result “in the progressive transformation” of the practitioners.<sup>29</sup>

Centering prayer is also one way the inmates can make themselves available to the “Spirit empowered rhythms and relationships,” that Macchia insists upon.<sup>30</sup> A rule of life without the help of the Holy Spirit can become nothing more than a behavior modification plan. Inmate behavior modification programs that rely exclusively on personal resolve often fail as high recidivism rates attest. Phileena Heuertz says, “It’s easier to go into survival mode, rather than to do the hard work of risking trust and relationship [with God].”<sup>31</sup> Some inmates will require divine intervention before their

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27. Although centering prayer is not formally considered a form of contemplative prayer, it can lead to it. Throughout the rest of this paper contemplative and centering prayer will be used interchangeably for the two forms of silent prayer.

28. Thomas Keating, *Intimacy with God: An Introduction to Centering Prayer* (New York: Crossroad, 2012), 176.

29. Thomas Keating, *On Divine Therapy* (New York: Lantern, 2012), 107.

30. Macchia, 14: “Your personal rule of life is a holistic description of the Spirit-empowered rhythms and relationships that create, redeem, sustain and transform the life God invites you to humbly fulfill for Christ’s glory.”

31. Phileena Heuertz, *Pilgrimage of a Soul* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2010), chap. 4, Kindle.

lives can change enough to keep them out of trouble in prison and keep them out of prison altogether.

At some point, the inmates have to choose to avoid participating in the harsh prison culture if they want to live life differently. Certainly, it takes time for the inward transformation of the inmates to be demonstrated into outward behaviors. As Keating explains, “Contemplation is not the reward of a virtuous life; it is a necessity for a virtuous life.”<sup>32</sup> While there is no guarantee that participating in any discipline will result in a safe completion of the prison sentence, it seems more likely if inmates practice positive behaviors instead of negative ones. Should they choose to practice centering prayer, they can experience a kind of internal resting in God. Keating says practicing it allows participants time to develop a “deepening of faith in God’s abiding presence.”<sup>33</sup> Realizing and remembering that God is with them when they face daily challenges can help them learn to rely increasingly on his help. Heuertz says instead of responding in ways they have previously, contemplative practices make participants “more receptive and supple in the hands of God.”<sup>34</sup> In the end, Keating explains,

In contemplative prayer the Spirit places us in a position where we are at rest and disinclined to fight. By his secret anointings, the Spirit heals the wounds of our fragile human nature at a level beyond our psychological perception, just as a person who is anesthetized has no idea of how the operation is going until after it is over. Interior silence is the perfect seed bed for divine love to take root....Divine love has the power to grow and to transform us. The purpose of

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32. Keating, *On Divine Therapy*, 137.

33. Keating, *On Divine Therapy*, 364. See also Calhoun, pt. 3: “Silence is a time to rest in God. Lean into God, trusting that being with him in silence will loosen your rootedness in the world.”

34. Heuertz, intro.

contemplative prayer is to facilitate the process of inner transformation.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, experiencing divine love is crucial for inner transformation. However, though the acceptance and development of divine love may be necessary, it also presents another challenge for inmates. They will have to become vulnerable. Heuertz notes, “Through brokenness we recognize our wounded condition and admit that we cannot heal ourselves. Transformation is possible when we accept our brokenness and long for that which only God can do for us.”<sup>36</sup> Inmates often resist the vulnerability that Heuertz is describing because vulnerability is often seen as a weakness. Yet, they must participate in the paradox of vulnerability if they want to participate in the divine milieu of transformation. Keating explains:

Moments of contemplative prayer bring about deep rest and deep bonding with God. As a consequence of this bonding, we have the courage and trust to face our mixed motivation and the dark side of our personality. The purification of our mixed motivation and selfishness can now begin because we can acknowledge our deepest wounds only to someone whom we know loves us and whom we trust. Love is the only way a human being can come into full being. . . . In moments of contemplation and as its ripe fruit, God shows us gently, little by little, what needs to be changed in us.<sup>37</sup>

The inmates have the option of choosing to remain open to divine love instead of trying to avoid their inner pain “through denial, blaming, rationalizations, addictions, and avoidance” or demanding that “others take away [their] pain.”<sup>38</sup>

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35. Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, 45.

36. Heuertz, chap. 2; Ruth Haley Barton, *Invitation to Solitude and Silence: Experiencing God's Transforming Presence* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press), chap. 2, Kindle: “[Silence and solitude] are not an end in themselves; they are merely a means through which we regularly make ourselves available to God for the intimacy of relationship and for the work of transformation that only God can accomplish.”

37. Keating, *On Divine Therapy*, 117.

38. Scazzero, chap. 1.



In the long run, the start of the spiritual journey requires self-surrender. However, it's the continual surrendering that makes growth possible. Heuertz says, "Surrendering to the spiritual journey, aided by the practice of contemplative prayer, is central to personal growth in attentiveness to the presence and love of God."<sup>39</sup> Adele Calhoun sees the spiritual disciplines themselves as a form of surrendering. She says, "Disciplines are intentional ways we open space in our lives for the worship of God. They are not harsh but grace-filled ways of responding to the presence of God with our bodies....Mastery of every discipline is not the goal. Surrendering to God is."<sup>40</sup> Heuertz goes on to explain the far-reaching effects of contemplative practices. She writes, "Contemplative spirituality carves the posture of surrender into the fabric of our being."<sup>41</sup> Both Heuertz and Calhoun are suggesting that the habitual surrender to the daily divine impulses presents the repeated opportunities for inmates to participate with God's work in their lives and make changes. Ruth Haley Barton also speaks of the importance of spiritual practices. She says, "I cannot transform myself, or anyone else for that matter. What I can do is create the conditions in which spiritual transformation can take place, by developing and maintaining a rhythm of spiritual practices that keep me open and available to God."<sup>42</sup>

Even if practicing centering prayer or other spiritual disciplines do not lead to behavior changes that result in parole, inmates could, nonetheless, learn how to live with

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39. Heuertz, chap. 1.

40. Calhoun, intro., Kindle.

41. Heuertz, intro.

42. Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2006), intro., Kindle.

each other in ways that do not result in harmful or deadly clashes. Keating notes, “Progress in the spiritual journey is manifest by the unconditional acceptance of other people, beginning with those with whom we live.”<sup>43</sup> He goes on to point out the benefit of practicing silence, which is an essential part of centering prayer:

Contemplative prayer fosters a whole different attitude toward one’s feelings; it puts them in a different frame of reference. Most extreme feelings come from a sense of insecurity, especially when we feel threatened. But when you are being constantly reaffirmed by the presence of God in deep silence, you are not afraid of being contradicted or imposed upon. You might be humble enough to learn something from insults and humiliation without being overwhelmed by feelings of self-depreciation or revenge.<sup>44</sup>

Calhoun adds, “Silence opens up the contents of our heart, allowing us deeper access to God than we experience at other times. As we remain in the silence, the inner noise and chaos will begin to settle. Our capacity to open up wider and wider to God grows.”<sup>45</sup>

Exactly how God transforms lives cannot be reduced to a one-to-one correspondence between practices and outcome – that if we pray, fast, worship God, etc. a certain amount of time, certain results will happen. “Perhaps one of the most basic things we need to understand about spiritual transformation is that it is full of mystery.”<sup>46</sup> Still, it must be noted that centering prayer’s effects reach beyond the discipline it develops. Keating explains, “It is not a charismatic gift but a path of transformation.”<sup>47</sup> That is, the fruits of the practice are not earmarked for certain individuals as the

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43. Keating, *On Divine Therapy*, 107.

44. Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, 65.

45. Calhoun, pt. 3.

46. Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*, intro.

47. Keating, *On Divine Therapy*, 355.

charismatic gifts seem to be, but the opportunity to be transformed by its practice is available to all. Calhoun asserts, “In centering prayer the goal is to so dwell in Christ that the fruit of this dwelling begins to show up in your life. Centering prayer may ‘do’ nothing at the moment. You sense no rapture, no mystical bliss. But later, you begin to notice that something has shifted. Your quiet center in Christ holds.”<sup>48</sup> Her conclusions do not suggest passivity, however. Inmates will still have to be alert and willing to continue to welcome divine assistance after their prayer sessions end. Calhoun continues by noting that a return to the sacred word repeated during the discipline should be repeated throughout the day as a reminder of being in a loving relationship with God.<sup>49</sup> Those reminders of the divine connection can help the inmates make better choices. In any case, the primary fruit of centering prayer – divine love – cannot only be experienced by the pray-er but also by those with whom he comes in contact. Cynthia Bourgeault makes the point that a major goal of spiritual formation is to align normal awareness with divine awareness in such a way that the “alignment flows from innermost out.”<sup>50</sup> Ultimately, inmates *can* live the “Spirit-empowered” life that Macchia insists God has for them – with or without centering prayer – but not without God’s help.

#### The Chaplain as a Leader in the Prison

In the final analysis, this research project ended up being more of a personal conceptual study than an empirical one. I learned more about me as a practitioner of centering prayer than about the effects of centering prayer as a means of helping inmates

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48. Calhoun, pt. 7.

49. Calhoun, pt. 7.

50. Cynthia Bourgeault, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening* (Lanham, Maryland: Cowley Publications, 2004), chap. 2, Kindle.

implement a rule of life. Admittedly, I had been disciplined in implementing my own rule of life well before I started practicing centering prayer. However, it was not until I became a participant observer in my project that I formally wrote out the rule of life I had been practicing for years. That was when I realized I needed to make some changes, primarily in the area of self-care. As I reflected on ways to improve, I also remembered what my life was like before I started practicing centering prayer daily. Beforehand, I had only prayed orally. Eventually, I realized that after I had been practicing centering prayer for some time, my life started to change in marked ways.

A seminary classmate introduced me to centering prayer in 2003 at a height of what had become my anxiety-ridden life. I immediately started to practice once a day but quickly abandoned it. At the time, I was working hard to get As in all my classes. I assumed the only way to get “perfect” grades was to work harder and longer. I concluded twenty minutes more to practice centering prayer was too much of a sacrifice. Therefore, I kept my oral prayer discipline and continued to work long hours. Although I never reached my goal of all As, I adhered to that routine of oral praying and over-working for years after I graduated in 2006 and continued to neglect most forms of self-care in the meantime. In January 2011, I remember being somewhat relieved when I sensed a divine prompting to start centering prayer again. By that time, I was teaching in a public elementary school, pastoring in a church, preparing for my first doctoral studies residency, and starting to break down. Not only was I unable to produce to my own perfectionistic standards, but I was also starting to experience what would later become chronic insomnia.

Meanwhile, I started my days rushing – through Scripture and other devotional readings and through prayer lists prayed orally. I continued rushing throughout the day. Whatever I did before bed, I usually rushed through it. Although I was too busy at the time to conclude that centering prayer gave me at least twenty minutes a day of rest, I realize now that it did. I did not have to perform or produce anything during the practice. Keating writes that centering prayer enables us “to rest habitually in the presence of God...[and] strengthens our capacity for interior silence.”<sup>51</sup>

By 2013 I needed rest more than ever although I was no longer teaching and had lessened my pastoral duties significantly. The insomnia that had mildly started in 2011 had become severe. I was no longer sleeping most nights of the week. I could barely function. I had a sleep study done which revealed no physical reason for my poor sleep. I considered and started to seek therapy for depression, but I stopped. I knew I was not depressed. I was just tired from being sleep deprived. As time droned on, I continued to practice centering prayer and started to enjoy the slower pace of my morning devotional time. I hardly prayed orally anymore and added an afternoon session of centering prayer. By then, I was practicing for an hour or more a day. Although I continued to be frustrated at not being able to perform anything as quickly or as well as I once did, I stopped complaining about it as much as I had previously. In hindsight, I believe I was starting the journey to emotional health. Scazzero cites “the gift of slowing down” as one of the signs of God’s transformative work in our lives.<sup>52</sup>

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51. Keating, *Intimacy with God*, 16.

52. Scazzero, chap. 3. The other gifts he mentions are “the gift of anchoring in God’s love; and the gift of breaking free from illusions.” God had already started to work in these other two areas of my life previously and continues to do so currently.

To date, the most significant changes in my life have happened in the past six or seven years. During that time, I began to notice more about God and about me. Although I am still not completely free of insomnia, those observations have made significant changes in my perspective. One fairly recent example integrates my observations. Shortly after I started the job as a chaplain, an inmate cussed me out, and another one had a cavalier attitude about my book that he lost. I was angry with both of them and intended to retaliate. I was certain they would ask for my help in the future, and I planned to quickly deny them. Little did I know, not only would I not carry out those vindictive plans, but I would end up being helped by those incidents in several ways. First of all, I realized I was also capable of the vindictive, unhelpful, and unempathetic attitude I have witnessed countless times from prison staff members. I attribute that realization to the regular periods of centering prayer which quieted my mind, promoted interior silence, and helped me to know myself.<sup>53</sup> I could recall the many moments I believed God revealed things about me that were not loving or kind these past several years. I never felt condemned and instead learned to recognize those moments as indications of areas in my life that were being divinely transformed. I agree with Keating when he says, “God gently, but with incomparable skill, brings emotional wounds and painful truths about ourselves to our attention both during prayer and in the course of daily life.”<sup>54</sup>

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53. Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, 131.

54. Keating, *On Divine Therapy*, 165. See also Keating, 100-101: “You keep coming back constantly to the same old routines, but they are not really the same because you change, even though nothing may change outwardly in your life.”

Second, I concluded that God expects me to be different from the harshness that I see in other staff members and to be helpful regardless. It is not only inmates who require my help despite their misbehavior or negative attitudes, in general, or towards me, but also staff members. Almost daily I experience their surliness, deceitfulness, and meanness. Rohr helped me form a perspective that keeps me from wanting to retaliate. He says,

The only thing that the silence has taught me: our lives are useable for God. We need not be effective but only transparent and vulnerable. God takes it all from there, and there is not much point in comparing who is better, right, higher or lower, or supposedly saved. We are all partial images slowly coming into focus, to the degree we allow and filter the Light and Love of God.<sup>55</sup>

Therefore, I believe God gives me the grace to be loving, kind, and caring to people who often are not.

Third, I realized I could draw some new conclusions about God. I concluded God's call for me to return to centering prayer like Basil Pennington says as "a response to God's great love" for me and as a call for me to open my heart to him.<sup>56</sup> Before then, God had always seemed distant and aloof. I agree with some of Thomas Merton's last words before his death, recorded by David Steindl-Rast:

Nothing that anyone says will be that important. The great thing is prayer. Prayer itself. If you want a life of prayer, the way to get it is by praying. We were indoctrinated so much into means and ends that we don't realize that there is a different dimension in the life of prayer. In technology you have this horizontal progress, where you must start at one point and move to another and then another. But that is not the way to build a life of prayer. In prayer we discover what we already have. You start where you are and you deepen what you already have, and you realize that you are already there. We already have everything, but

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55. Rohr, chap. 6.

56. M. Basil Pennington, *Centering Prayer: Renewing an Ancient Christian Prayer Form* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 96.

we don't know it and we don't experience it. Everything has been given to us in Christ. All we need is to experience what we already possess. The trouble is we aren't taking the time to do so.<sup>57</sup>

Those one or two sessions a day of silent centering prayer for six or seven years helped me see God more differently than twenty years of daily oral praying did.

Eventually, the two incidents with the inmates with whom I planned to retaliate helped me realize that as a chaplain, I can be a spiritual leader to staff and inmates. Because the events happened so early in my career, they function as daily ethical signposts. My plans for vengeance were inappropriate and would have been a misuse of power. It would have also been a direct violation of the commandment to love others, regardless of what they say or do to me. Therefore, I now know whenever I think about retaliation or speak disrespectfully to inmates or staff, it is a sign that I am tired. Then I know I need to practice more self-care and/or apologize. I have learned from brief comments made by staff and inmates that they were observing me – and were doing so long before I became aware of it. Keating explains, “Contemplative prayer is aimed at transforming daily life with its never-ending round of ordinary activities.”<sup>58</sup> In my daily tasks as a prison chaplain, I recognize that I am a reflection of God to the people who live and work there.

In the seven years that I have been on this contemplative journey – practicing *lectio divina* at times and practicing centering prayer daily – I have come to believe that I have been going through a purification process. Bourgeault explains, “No matter which

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57. David Steindl-Rast, “Recollections of Thomas Merton’s Last Days in the West” at <https://gratefulness.org/resource/recollections-of-thomas-mertons-last-days-in-the-west/> (accessed September 21, 2018).

58. Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, 125.



spiritual path you pursue, the nuts and bolts of transformation wind up looking pretty much the same: surrender, detachment, compassion, forgiveness.”<sup>59</sup> I have had to learn to surrender or detach my expectations and desires and recognize and accept the divine will. Bourgeault goes on to say, “The kenotic spirituality (self-emptying as the path to fullness) is, in my opinion, Jesus’s unique and profoundly original contribution to the spiritual consciousness of humankind.”<sup>60</sup> I now look at Jesus’ life and ministry as the prime example for my own. Previously, I concentrated on the fact that he is my Savior. Instead of looking to God to help me emulate Jesus’ lifestyle of listening and obeying God, I circled repeatedly and shamefully from misbehavior (sin) to seeking forgiveness.

Surrendering to God’s work of transformation has not been easy, and it has taken much longer than I would have liked. Heuertz’s understanding of the role of performance in our lives is applicable to me. She says, “It seems that surrender is the most difficult of postures for humanity. We much prefer self-sufficiency and self-righteousness.”<sup>61</sup> I spent years of feeling frustrated when it seemed like nothing was happening the way I preferred. I did not want to surrender my hopes and ways to God. However, I did have moments when I was grateful for being able to practice *lectio divina* and centering prayer. I could not explain what was happening to me, but I felt as if they were somehow holding me together. Calhoun explains,

It is not the spiritual disciplines per se that transform us into the likeness of Christ. Without the work of God’s Spirit within, practices guarantee nothing....

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59. Cynthia Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing: Reclaiming an Ancient Tradition to Awaken the Heart* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2003), intro., Kindle.

60. Cynthia Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus: Transforming Heart and Mind – A New Perspective on Christ and His Message* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2008), chap. 5, Kindle.

61. Heuertz, intro.

Disciplines done for the wrong reasons actually sabotage transformation and numb us toward God and the truth....The Holy Spirit knows the spiritual practices, relationships and experiences that best suit our unique communion with God.<sup>62</sup>

I continue to practice centering prayer and continue to need physical rest as a result of continual, though not as frequent as before, bouts of insomnia. Apparently, the interior work for this season of my life is not complete. Keating says, “When God thinks we have rested long enough on one of these plateaus, he takes up the work of purification once again, as if to say, ‘Now let’s look at some other significant issues.’”<sup>63</sup> I have finally learned during quiet moments of reflection that I do not have to perform perfectly for God. That understanding allows me to rest even when I am not formally praying because it has lessened the performance anxiety that I used to constantly carry. Also, I can more readily remember that God is with me, regardless of what is happening in my life at the time. Rohr’s words have helped me: “Failure and falling short are the best teachers; success has practically nothing to teach on the spiritual path.”<sup>64</sup> I finally stopped seeing God as primarily a judgmental Being judiciously administering punishments to me and began to realize that God does love me. (I realize my previous views of God stemmed largely from my significant childhood relationships.)

Eventually, my overall response to events in my daily life changed, also. Instead of quickly responding, I learned to pause and plan my reaction. Although I am not as

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62. Calhoun, intro.

63. Keating, *On Divine Therapy*, 171. Keating does mention an end to the purification process (p 102). However, I am sure I have not reached it.

64. Rohr, chap. 7.

consistent as I would like, I do attribute this noticeable change to centering prayer.

Keating says,

The constant starting over with patience, calm, and acceptance trains us for the acceptance of the whole of life. It prepares us for action. There should be a basic acceptance of whatever is actually happening before we decide what to do with it....The practice of this prayer will make the events of life easier to handle because you will be able to let them come and go also. Centering prayer is training in letting go.<sup>65</sup>

I had to learn to let some anxious or angry emotions go. Keating goes on to explain, “The purpose of this prayer [centering prayer] is not more prayer or more silence, but the integration of prayer and silence with activity....Interior freedom is the goal of this prayer. Not freedom to do what you like, but freedom to do what God likes – freedom to be your true Self and to be transformed in Christ.”<sup>66</sup> I need God to help me live my rule of life daily. Pennington rightly cautions, “Complete reintegration does not take place immediately, nor does it come about by our own power, but by God’s grace. It is usually a slow process. Contemplative prayer, centering prayer, is one of the most effective ways to open us to this grace and also to help us cooperate with it.”<sup>67</sup>

All in all, what this study suggested to me as a leader in a prison is that Macchia’s program for implementing a rule of life will help some inmates, but others will need to supplement it with contemplative practices such as *lectio divina* or centering prayer in order to change their lives and to keep them from becoming or remaining repeat offenders. After all, “The goal of the Christian life is not so much a set of behaviors as it

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65. Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, 55-6.

66. Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, 65, 100.

67. Pennington, 121.

is an orientation of the soul toward God and his kingdom.”<sup>68</sup> I am like the inmates. I have learned that there are times a simple return to the standards I believe the Holy Spirit helped me to devise as a rule of life will cause the change I wish to see. At other times I believe I needed the quiet moments of solitude in the Divine Presence to be able to handle the demands of my professional life working in a prison. Ultimately, Thomas Keating succinctly expresses what has become the foundation of my life and my role as a chaplain in the prison as a result of this research project. He says, “What Jesus proposed to his disciples as the Way is his own example: the forgiveness of everything and everyone and the service of others in their needs. ‘Love one another as I have loved you.’”<sup>69</sup>

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68. Calhoun, 3022.

69. Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, 137.

## APPENDICES

### Pre-Survey Questionnaire of Prayer Practices

As part of the Doctor of Ministry program at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, I am planning to conduct some research to help strengthen Christian discipleship. One of the areas I will be looking at is prayer. This brief questionnaire will give me some information about your prayer practices and will help me determine which research group would be better for you. It should take you no more than five minutes to complete the questions. Thank you very much. All information on this form is confidential.

Rev. Annette Brewer

Name \_\_\_\_\_

#### Religious Persuasion

1. Are you a Christian?                      ☐ Yes                      ☐ No

#### Kinds of Prayer in the Past

2. Name the kinds of prayers you have practiced in the past.

☐ Praying out loud                      ☐ Silent Prayer                      ☐ Meditation  
☐ Chanting                      ☐ Praying in Tongues                      ☐ Centering Prayer  
☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### Kinds of Prayer Now

3. What kinds of prayers do you practice now?

☐ Praying out loud                      ☐ Silent Prayer                      ☐ Meditation  
☐ Chanting                      ☐ Praying in Tongues                      ☐ Centering Prayer  
☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### How Often Now

4. How often do you pray? Use the following scale and put a number by each, if applicable:

1 – Once a day                      2 – Twice a day                      3 – Three or more times a day

☐ Praying out loud                      ☐ Silent Prayer                      ☐ Meditation  
☐ Chanting                      ☐ Praying in Tongues                      ☐ Centering Prayer  
☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Assignment Sheet for *Creating a Rule of Life* for Group A

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Group Discussions</b>	<b>Homework Assignments</b> Read the book and <u>answer</u> <u>all questions in complete</u> <u>sentences</u> in your journal.
July 23	Introductions	Introduction Chapter 1
Week 1: July 30	Chapter 1	Chapter 2
Week 2: August 6	Chapter 2	Chapter 3
Week 3: August 13	Chapter 3	Chapter 4
Week 4: August 20	Chapter 4	Chapter 5
Week 5: August 27	Chapter 5	Chapter 6
Week 6: September 3	Chapter 6	Chapter 7
Week 7: September 10	Chapter 7	Chapter 8
Week 8: September 17	Chapter 8	Chapter 9
Week 9: September 24	Chapter 9	Chapter 10
Week 10: October 1	No Class	Chapter 11
Week 11: October 8	No Class	Chapter 12, Conclusion
Week 12: October 15	Chapter 10	Draft your Rule of Life
Week 13: October 22	No Class	Review your Rule of Life Chapter 11
Week 14: October 29	Chapter 11 Review your Rule of Life	Chapter 12, Conclusion Review Your Rule of Life One of the selections from "Four Individuals Crafting Their Personal Rule of Life"
Week 15: November 5	Chapter 12, Conclusion Review your Rule of Life One of the selections from "Four Individuals Crafting Their Personal Rule of Life"	Review Your Rule of Life One of the selections from "Four Individuals Crafting Their Personal Rule of Life"
Week 16: November 12	Review Your Rule of Life One of the selections from "Four Individuals Crafting Their Personal Rule of Life" <b>Post-Survey Questionnaire</b>	

Assignment Sheet for *Creating a Rule of Life* for Group B

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Group Discussions</b>	<b>Homework Assignments</b> Read the book and <u>answer all questions in complete sentences</u> in your journal.
July 23	Introductions	Introduction Chapter 1
Week 1: July 30	Chapter 1	Chapter 2
Week 2: August 6	Chapter 2	Chapter 3
Week 3: August 13	Chapter 3	Chapter 4
Week 4: August 20	Chapter 4	Chapter 5
Week 5: August 27	Chapter 5	Chapter 6
Week 6: September 3	Chapter 6	Chapter 7
Week 7: September 10	Chapter 7	Chapter 8
Week 8: September 17	Chapter 8	Chapter 9
Week 9: September 24	Chapter 9	Chapter 10
Week 10: October 1	Chapter 10	Chapter 11
Week 11: October 8	Chapter 11	Chapter 12, Conclusion
Week 12: October 15	Chapter 12, Conclusion	Draft/Review your Rule of Life
Week 13: October 22	No Class	Review Your Rule of Life One of the selections from “Four Individuals Crafting Their Personal Rule of Life”
Week 14: October 29	Review Your Rule of Life One of the selections from “Four Individuals Crafting Their Personal Rule of Life”	Review Your Rule of Life One of the selections from “Four Individuals Crafting Their Personal Rule of Life”
Week 15: November 5	Review your Rule of Life One of the selections from “Four Individuals Crafting Their Personal Rule of Life”	Review Your Rule of Life One of the selections from “Four Individuals Crafting Their Personal Rule of Life”
Week 16: November 12	Review Your Rule of Life One of the selections from “Four Individuals Crafting Their Personal Rule of Life” <b>Post-Survey Questionnaire</b>	



### Post-Survey Questionnaire

Thank you very much for completing the research program. The information you provide on this form will help me gather some information on our meetings over the past few months. All information will be anonymous and will only be reported in generalities. It should take you less than 10 minutes to complete. Thank you, again.

Rev. Annette Brewer

#### Rule of Life

1. I developed a rule of life.

\_\_\_Yes

\_\_\_No

#### Development of the Rule of Life

2. I had a \_\_\_\_\_ time developing the rule of life. (**Check only one.**)

\_\_\_difficult

\_\_\_somewhat difficult

\_\_\_easy

Please explain further.

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#### Living the Rule of Life

3. I have had a \_\_\_\_\_ time living according to my rule of life. (**Check only one.**)

\_\_\_difficult

\_\_\_somewhat difficult

\_\_\_easy

Please explain further.

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#### Plans

4. I will continue to practice my rule of life.

\_\_\_Yes

\_\_\_No

Please explain further.

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#### Final Thoughts

5. Do you have any final thoughts you would like to share about the program?

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Chapter Summary  
1 – Roles  
What Are My Primary Relationships?

**Guiding Principle:** Your personal rule of life is discovered and made by considering your important relationships, your spiritual community, and how you can serve others.

**Biblical Reflection:** Read 1 Samuel 18-20 to think about David’s life and the many roles he had.

**Historical Insight:** C.S. Lewis, the author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Screwtape Letters*, and *Mere Christianity*, had many roles: writer, theologian, friend, hero, son, brother, husband, stepfather, spiritual father. One role that he took very serious was as a spiritual director. He wrote letters as his way of helping to meet the spiritual needs of others.

**Personal Rule of Life:** Starting to write your rule of life begins with identifying your primary roles and relationships. When answering the questions, write the first thing that comes to mind. You will have chance later on to change it if you want. You will return to these ideas again and again and watch the seeds of them grow, be pruned, and blossom – all to the glory of God.

Some of your roles may be life-giving; some may not be. That’s normal.

**Spiritual Community:** Did you relate to any parts of David’s story?  
Did C.S. Lewis’ life speak to you?  
**What are your roles?**  
**Which of your roles need the most attention during this time?**

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## What Am I Currently Doing to Pursue My Vision?

**Guiding Principle:** Your personal rule of life is discovered and made within the specific purpose(s) God invites you to fulfill in this season of life.

**Biblical Reflection:** Read about the Apostle Paul’s mission – to preach Jesus to the Gentiles (Romans 1.5; Romans 15.24; Galatians 1.11-17; Ephesians 3.1-21; Philippians 3.1-11; Colossians 1.24-25).

**Historical Insight:** Adoniram Judson's *gifts* were evangelism and languages; his *desire* was to be the first international American missionary; his *vision* was to spread the gospel around the world; his *mission* was to present the gospel to the Burmese people.

**Personal Rule of Life:** List words and phrases that best describe your involvement in your relationships and your responsibilities while you are at Evans.

Which relationship and role could you eliminate for now?

### Which relationship and role need greater attention now?

**Prayerfully write a draft of your personal mission statement.**

**Spiritual Community:** What in the Apostle Paul's story energizes you?  
What about Adoniram Judson's story excites you?  
**What part of your rule of life can you share with the group?**

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

*Centering Prayer Notes #4*

*I know you are still wondering if 20 minutes once or twice a day of this simple prayer is doing any good. (smile) Monks would tell you it is. They have centuries of witnessing the transformative power of contemplative praying. The only modern changes they made in the 1970s was the introduction of group prayer instead of individual monks praying in their cells and a clearly marked beginning and ending of prayer sessions by ringing a bell or bowl.*

*Cynthia Bourgeault, an Episcopal clergy woman, also assures us that changes will happen in our lives albeit sometimes slowly. This is a work of grace, not individual achievement. Cynthia tells the story of Russian Orthodox Bishop Anthony Bloom: "A woman came to him and said, 'You know, my prayer life seems dry.' And he says, 'Well how do you pray?' She says, 'Well, I talk to God. I thank him for these things. I ask these petitions. I confess my sins.' And on she went. 'Well, madam, no wonder your prayers are dry. Poor God can't get a word in edgewise.'"*

*Remember your thoughts are inevitable. Don't allow them to be distractions. Trust the process.*

*You may have 'aha' moments in prayer and find it difficult to return your sacred word. Trust the process.*

*You may experience pleasant or troubling emotions. Trust the process.*

*Remember thoughts are not a problem and do not interfere with your prayer. Trust the process.*

*Until next time, "The Lord be with you."*

### Chapter 10 – Talent

*A rule of life allows us to clarify our deepest values, our most important relationships, our most authentic hopes and dreams, our most meaningful work, our highest priorities....It allows us to live with intention and purpose in the present moment. [It is] a way of regulating or regularizing our lives so that we can stay on the path we have set out for ourselves. (page 14)*

	Talent: Your Missional Priorities
Daily/Regularly	
Weekly	
Monthly	
Quarterly/Seasonally	
Annually	

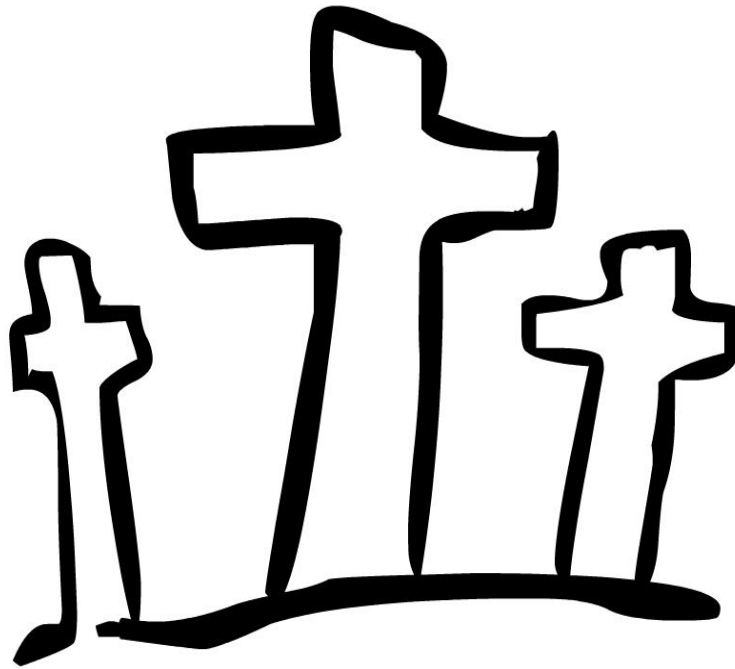
## Chapter 10 – Weaving Together Your Personal Rule of Life

*A rule of life allows us to clarify our deepest values, our most important relationships, our most authentic hopes and dreams, our most meaningful work, our highest priorities....It allows us to live with intention and purpose in the present moment. [It is] a way of regulating or regularizing our lives so that we can stay on the path we have set out for ourselves. (page 14)*

	Time	Trust	Temple	Treasure	Talent
Daily/ Regularly					
Weekly					
Monthly					
Quarterly/ Seasonally					
Annually					

Assignment Sheet for *Creating a Rule of Life*  
with (Volunteer) Chaplain Annette Brewer

Dates	Group Discussions	Homework Assignments
		Complete reflections and survey sheets.
Week 1: November 5	Introduction/Pre-Survey Questionnaire	
November 7	Time: Spiritual Priorities	
Week 2: November 12	Trust: Relational Priorities	
November 14	Temple: Physical Priorities Treasure: Financial Priorities	
Week 3: November 19	Talent: Missional Priorities	
November 21	Weaving It All Together	
	<b>Written Rule of Life</b>	
Week 4: November 26	<b>Written Rule of Life Due</b>	
November 28	Thanksgiving Holiday	
Week 5: December 3	Review	
December 5	Exit Interview/Post Survey Questionnaire	



## Crafting a Rule of Life

### Session One

What are my God-given gifts, talents, and temperament?  
What is the intentional passion God has placed in me?

**We bring order to our lives to make ourselves available to God.**



## Session One – Gifts, Talents, Temperament, and Passion

### Guiding Principle

Your personal rule of life is discovered and made by discovering your spiritual gifts, talents, temperament, and the passion God has planted in your heart.

### Biblical Reflection

Read 2 Timothy 3.10-4.8 to think about Paul's charge to Timothy to use his gifts to help build the church.

Read about the call that God planted in other people – Adam and Eve (Genesis 2.16-17); Noah (Genesis 6); Abram (Genesis 12); Joseph (37-50); Samuel (1 Samuel 3); Moses (Exodus 19-34; Deuteronomy 32-33).

### Historical Insight

Phillis Wheatley sensed God's pleasure when she wrote poetry.

Benedict looked to God for a way to best live for Christ in a world that wasn't living for Christ.

### Personal Rule of Life:

Name some natural talents that can be used for God's glory. (See Exodus 35.30-31; 1 Chronicles 22.15-16; cooking, carpentry, etc.).

---

Name some spiritual gifts that your friends have suggested are in you. Put a check mark by the ones you agree with your friends about you.

---

How can you serve others with the gifts and talents you have?

---

What passion (calling) do you think God has placed in your soul?

---

What do you see as your primary temperament and how can it fit with your calling?

---

When you think about the future, how do you see your calling and passion coming together?

---

Did any of the historical or biblical characters appeal to you in this session? If so, how and why?

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Excerpts from Chaplain Brewer's Lecture Notes for Session Three:

William Wilberforce

- born August 24, 1759 to a rich family
- dad died when he was 10
- went to live with aunt and uncle who were Christians
- heard John Newton speak  
former slave-ship owner who wrote "Amazing Grace"
- mother became worried about him becoming a Methodist and sent him to boarding school
- at 17 went to St. John's College of Cambridge; while there received an inheritance from his uncle; did not have to work
- 1780 – elected to Parliament; not very serious about his work
- 1784 – became a Christian  
convicted of frivolous lifestyle  
developed contempt for his wealth and idleness  
developed a passion for helping the poor  
seriously considered leaving politics but convinced to stay by John

Newton and William Pitt

- 1787 – wrote in his diary:

**"God almighty has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the Slave Trade and the Reformation of Manners (i.e., morals)."**

- took 45 years to abolish slave trade in England; died 3 days after the bill was passed
- he and friends responsible for helping to alleviate child abuse, poverty, illiteracy, and founded the Bible Society to see that people got Bibles, etc.
- routinely gave 25% of his salary away; one year gave £3,000 more than he earned.

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## VITA

Annette Payne Brewer was born in Charleston, South Carolina and also lived in Louisiana, Virginia, and Delaware before finally settling in Charleston for high school. After high school she joined the Army, where she met her husband, Paul. She later finished college with a Bachelor's in Business Administration and eventually a Master's in Education. When her husband retired from the Army in 2001, they settled in his small hometown in rural South Carolina. Annette taught students in one of the local elementary schools, but after a year entered Duke Divinity School to formally prepare for ministry. She completed the Master of Divinity and Master of Theology degrees in 2005 and 2006, respectively. Upon graduation Annette returned to teaching in the local public school and started pastoring in 2008. She was ordained in 2010 in the Presbyterian (USA) denomination. That year she also began preparing for her first residency at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in the Doctor of Ministry program. Annette wondered about the interior life as a teenager. As an adult, she did not know how to or where to begin her studies. She stumbled onto St. John of the Cross early in her Christian journey but was unable to place him in her theological understanding at the time. In 2011, she began practicing centering prayer and later completed a study on its affects as part of her doctoral program. The positive outcomes of that study and her personal observations led to the present study in one of the local state prisons. She continues to practice and study centering prayer.

Annette and Paul have three sons – Paul III, Nicholas, and Derek. She loves reading, knitting, and learning.